

Local Area Coordination in the Australian Capital Territory

External Evaluation Summary Report

A Collaboration between Belconnen Community Service Inc., Woden Community Service Inc. and Disability ACT.

Australian Capital Territory
December 2007

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Please note that this Summary report is an abridged version of the Full Report (Internal), which contains a substantial amount of detailed information for internal use. Given the detailed reporting of interview data and the highly personal nature of the individual profiles and outcomes data in particular, it was considered most appropriate that this level of more detailed personal information remain for internal project use only. Should specific matters contained in the full report or appendices be of particular interest, then these can be discussed on a case by case basis with the LAC Manager.

1. Executive Summary of Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall finding of this external evaluation is that the LAC program in the ACT has been well implemented and achieved a sound level of progress over the first 17 months. This is especially so given the challenges of establishing a new program in the ACT service delivery system where there is reported to be a significant level of unmet demand, a high level of community expectation to receive specialist disability services and also a workforce shortage, with keen competition for staff.

The clear strength of the program has been the very high level of support from individuals and families who have been supported by LAC, along with the good demonstration of a wide range of beneficial outcomes, each in the context of a uniquely developmental relationship. Challenges remain with developing and sustaining ongoing partnerships with service providers and the strategic interface with DACT, with the good work so far needing to be strategically taken to the next step. The development and communication of an evidence base around the benefits of the LAC approach to individuals, families, communities and the overall disability system continues to be a high priority.

All aspects of implementation have been undertaken in a methodical manner and in general accordance with the underlying values and principles of the LAC approach. This is not to say that implementation has been a smooth process – quite the contrary, as each step has thrown up a new set of challenges to be met, particularly around staffing and continuity. The top priority at present, therefore, is to consolidate the current staffing team.

A unique feature of the LAC program in the ACT is that it is being delivered under contract through the community sector, as opposed to being delivered directly by government as it is in other Australian states and territories. This has presented a further set of both challenges and opportunities, particularly around interface with government issues. The learning from this project will therefore provide important information in the national and international context for others considering this type of approach.

It is considered that the sound progress so far provides a suitable foundation on which to build plans for the continuation and further expansion of this approach in the ACT.

Recommendation 1:

That the current LAC program continue on a recurrent basis from July 2008 and that this decision be communicated to the sector by February 2008.

Further specific recommendations related to each of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation follow:

Recommendation 2:

Planning for 2008/9 and onwards to take into account a review of budget requirements including a need for a clear staff recruitment and retention strategy.

Recommendation 3:

That a LAC Steering Committee be established, consisting of DACT and BCS/WCS representatives. The brief of the Committee would be to oversee the strategic implementation of LAC in the ACT, including such matters as DACT policy and strategic directions, "connection " of the LAC community level response, representation of LAC in formal meetings/advocacy and consultations, data to inform planning and areas where joint partnerships are required. Meetings to be held monthly initially commencing in February 2008.

Recommendation 4:

That the current style and approach of the LAC program continue.

Recommendation 5:

That the work of LAC to develop and strengthen community level responses continue and be extended to include groups such as business, sporting and arts.

Recommendation 6:

That DACT and LAC work jointly to categorise some of the systems level needs and impacts of the LAC program, specifically around people who may present as requiring additional services or resources, in order to build the "value for money" evidence of the LAC approach.

Recommendation 7:

That a specific strategy be developed to provide information and develop partnerships around the under-represented population of young children. This may include DACT brokering meetings with Child and Family Centres and mainstream education as well as exploring the potential of departmental contract management with children's services and family support agencies.

Recommendation 8:

That the LAC output targets for 2008/9 be in the range of 120-140 people registered for ongoing support and that the next Service Agreement clarify requirements regarding annual reviews/feedback and measurement of community attitudes.

Recommendation 9:

That the Memorandum of Understanding underpinning the current BCS and WCS governance arrangements be formally reviewed, in order to build on the progress so far and add further value.

Recommendation 10:

That LAC continue as an "access pathway option" to ACT based disability services and its role not be expanded as a single gateway or portal.

Recommendation 11:

That the current local area boundaries remain and be reviewed in June 2008, with possible extension as needed to adjoining areas (including a relocation of offices if required).

Recommendation 12:

That a staged expansion plan be developed for ACT wide coverage of LAC during the 3 year period 2009-2012, building on the current foundation of governance and expertise. As part of this plan, the DACT Information Service to be transferred along with the associated resources, at an appropriate point of consolidation and coverage.

2. Background

2.1 The Project and Organizational Arrangements

Local Area Coordination (LAC) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is a new program initiative funded by Disability ACT and provided through a partnership of Belconnen Community Service (BCS) Inc as the lead agency and Woden Community Service (WCS) Inc as the partner agency. The agencies were appointed by means of a tender process in late 2005.

In this partnership model, LAC offices have been established as required in Gungahlin and Woden Valley (locality of Phillip) and the program is governed through the Board of Management of BCS Inc, with a working agreement between the two partner agencies as set out in a Memorandum of Understanding. An LAC Manager has been appointed who manages the program on a day to day basis and supervises the two Local Area Coordinators based in each office (total of 4). The LAC Manager reports operationally to the Executive Director of BCS and all infrastructure support is provided by that agency.

Belconnen Community Service Inc and WCS Inc have considerable expertise in providing disability and non disability support services in both the chosen localities.

The LAC initiative supports priorities contained in the "Future Directions Strategy 2004-08" for the ACT and is modeled on other successful LAC programs operating in other Australian States and Territories (notably Western Australia, Queensland and NSW).

The LAC program was officially launched on 31st August 2006, with the doors of both the offices being open for business from the commencement of July 2006.

2.2 The Evaluator

Eddie Bartnik has 30 years policy, funding and operational service experience in the disability sector. During 2007 he is on secondment from his role as Director, Metropolitan Services Coordination with the West Australian Government Disability Services Commission and is working as the part time Development Officer with a new family based organisation called PIN (Planned Individual Networks Inc).

This evaluation has been undertaken in his private role as Director, Tamar Consultancy Pty Ltd. Eddie also has extensive interstate and international experience as a consultant, trainer and keynote speaker. In particular, he has had a key leadership role in the development and implementation of Local Area Coordination in Western Australia, and subsequent implementation of the model across various Australian States and Territories and more recently in the UK.

Eddie's qualifications include a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology, Master of Educational Studies and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours in Psychology). He is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability and an Associate Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management.

Eddie has masters level training in both theory and practice of evaluation as well as research. He has designed, conducted and managed a range of complex evaluation projects including a joint State/Commonwealth Post School Options evaluation for WA, the Ministerial Review of the state wide Local Area Co-ordination program in WA, various interagency evaluations of accommodation services, and in 2006 an External Evaluation of the Circles of Support Initiative in South Australia.

Relevant experience in the Australian Capital Territory includes being an expert witness for the Gallop Inquiry (on LAC as an innovative model of funding and support), an external evaluation team member for the Evaluation of Future Directions 2004-08 and a minor role in supporting the introduction of LAC in the ACT through the provision of various seminars and information.

2.3 Acknowledgements

The evaluator would like to thank everyone who participated in the external evaluation by sharing their time, experiences, views and suggestions for the future. In particular, the LAC Manager and team are especially acknowledged for their efforts to provide comprehensive data and documentation for the evaluation.

3. Evaluation Planning

3.1 Purpose and Terms of Reference

The evaluation of the Local Area Coordination Program will review the effectiveness of the program's operation in the ACT from July 2006 - November 2007. The evaluation report will inform program improvement and provide some information which will inform the future role of LAC in the ACT.

The evaluation will address the following matters:

- 1.** In consultation with program staff, service users, carers, families, providers and other key stakeholders, the evaluation will determine the effectiveness of LAC in meeting the stated objectives of the program, as stated in the agreement. The evaluation will also describe and review program processes and the style of service delivery
- 2.** Identify systemic barriers to the promotion and uptake of the LAC service in the ACT.
- 3.** Undertake qualitative and quantitative analysis of service delivery and highlight new and emerging needs and gaps in service.
- 4.** Do the program's governance arrangements contribute to the effectiveness of the model?
- 5.** Is LAC an "access pathway option" or a portal/gateway service to all ACT based disability services
- 6.** Can a community based LAC program be an effective service delivery model in the ACT? The evaluation will review program implementation and outcomes.
- 7.** Is the model sound and can it be replicated in its current form in other regions in the ACT?

Reporting:

The evaluator will report to an Evaluation Steering Committee comprising the Executive Directors of the contracted organisations (Belconnen Community Service Inc and Woden Community Service Inc.) and Disability ACT funder representatives. The Steering Committee will approve the Terms of Reference, project budget, methodology regarding stakeholder consultations and the final report. Day to day conduct of the evaluation will be managed in liaison with the LAC Manager.

3.2 Key Stakeholders

These were identified as:

- The people with disabilities and families involved
- The BCS Inc and WCS Inc Board and management
- Disability ACT
- LAC Manager and staff
- Various disability and community organizations

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling

A total of 26 interviews (total of 32 people) were conducted during the period 12-16 November 2007, comprising 13 individuals/families, 6 LAC staff/Manager/ Executive Directors, 7 other agencies and 6 staff from DACT.

The sampling process involved the LAC Manager developing a provisional sample that was then modified as necessary following feedback from the Evaluation Steering Committee.

The rationale for the sample was set out by the LAC Manager as follows:

Aim: To provide the evaluator with the broadest sample of people supported by the Local Area Coordination Team.

To provide the evaluator with the broadest sample of key stakeholders supporting people with a disability and their families in the two local areas.

Sample included:

- People recently referred to LAC < 3 months.
- People in receipt of longer term support >6 months.
- People from both local areas.
- People with ageing carers.
- People with complex high support needs.
- People residing independently in their local community.
- People in privately funded community cluster housing
- People who are high functioning and gainfully employed.
- Younger adults.
- People with dual diagnosis i.e. mental health issues.
- Recently moved to the ACT.

Representatives from:

- Disability ACT – funding body.
- Belconnen Community Service Inc – lead agency.
- Woden Community Service Inc – partnering agency.

- Carers ACT – Provides information, care and support across the ACT.
- Sharing Places – Provides community access for people with a disability across the ACT.
- The Events Reference Group – provides education/training and networking events for support workers across the ACT.
- Department of Education and Training ACT – Special Education and Early Intervention.
- ACTCOSS – Provide support to disadvantaged groups across the ACT.
- Advocacy for Inclusion – Advocacy support for people with a disability.
- Black Mountain School – School for students with disabilities.
- Woden School – School for students with disabilities.

In addition to the formal process of interviews and review of documentation, the evaluator was oriented to the geography and features of each community. He also observed a number of more informal interactions where representatives from community organizations were visiting the Woden Valley LAC office – these included people from areas such as MS Society, Acquired Brain Injury and also Woden Community Services.

4.2 Interviews and consent

Prior to the week of interviews, it was established with the LAC Manager that the existing signed consent forms on file for the individuals and families involved, was sufficient to cover the purposes of this evaluation.

All persons interviewed were offered the opportunity for “off the record” feedback. Interviews generally took about 45 minutes in person and 5-10 minutes less by phone. Where multiple people were present, their individual responses were recorded separately. A copy of the interview schedule is attached as Appendix 1 (Full Report).

Note that the individuals and families have had their initials changed to an arbitrary alphabetical listing e.g. AA, BB etc. Other persons interviewed have wherever possible been grouped by category.

4.3 Key documents

A comprehensive file of key documents was made available for the evaluation, with the file index attached as Appendix 2 (Full Report)

In addition, the evaluator examined three individual registered person's files (OO, WW, GG), one funding application for the ISP process as well as a sample of electronic records for OO and one staff supervision file.

4.4 Workshop to finalise recommendations

Once the draft Evaluation Report was completed and a set of preliminary recommendations drafted, the Evaluation Steering Committee met with the evaluator on the 17th and 18th December to make any necessary corrections or clarifications to the draft report and also discuss and finalise a set of agreed recommendations. The final report was tabled in mid January 2008 for submission to and approval by each of the relevant organisations. An action plan was also established to develop a communications strategy, convene the new LAC Steering Committee and also start work on a response to the various recommendations.

5. Description of Project Design and Implementation

5.1 Contract specification and Agreement

The approved Agreement states the contract period to be 6th January 2006 through to 30th June 2008, comprising a set up phase up to 30th June 2006 , an implementation phase 2006/7 and then an operational phase 2007/8. The draft Evaluation Report was made available for a scheduled meeting 17 December 2007, thereby enabling a timely decision regarding arrangements following the 30th June 2008.

It is understood that the usual process of contract management has been undertaken, with regular reports and acquittances provided to Disability ACT as required by the Agreement. The focus of the Evaluation will therefore be on the broader questions outlined in the Terms of Reference, rather than the specifics of compliance.

At a broad level, the service funding agreement describes the LAC service as "A program which takes a holistic approach to supporting people with a disability within a defined local community in the Gungahlin and Woden Valley areas" (p23).

5.2 Target Group

The Agreement states: "Individuals with a disability, their families and carers living in the defined local geographical areas of Gungahlin and Woden Valley (Phillip)". It is understood that the rationale for the specification of these areas was based on planning for a target group of mainly older carers in an established area (Woden Valley) and younger families in a new and expanding area (Gungahlin). The Agreement further sets outputs for 2006/7 as up to 40 families across both regions and as up to 80 families in 2007/8.

A detailed breakdown of people supported is provided in section 5.2 (Full report) on Outcomes and Outputs, along with age, nature of disability, referral source etc. On a general level, a total of 47 people have been registered for ongoing support and further time limited information and advocacy contacts have been provided to an additional 47 people. The 47 people for ongoing support are split 21 for Gungahlin and 26 for Woden Valley, with a wide range of disabilities and ages. The main group under-represented are preschool and young school aged children.

5.3 Staff and Governance arrangements

The LAC Manager has been a consistent person throughout the period of the project, overseeing the set up phase including the establishment of local offices, appointment and training of staff and communication in the sector. He has a very relevant background including recent roles as Training and Development Coordinator (Disability Services), Coordinator of the Career Development Initiatives Program for Young Adults with Disabilities in Regional NSW and a TAFE Tutor. He has a Diploma in Community Services as well as a trade qualification.

The planned four Local Area Coordinator positions have been far less stable, with only two of the original four appointments still in place (with one other original LAC having just recently transferred to another position.) Appendix 3 of the Full report provides a visual representation of tenure in each of the 4 positions, with a total of 8 individual people employed over the project period. All three current LACs have relevant backgrounds and experience (eg LAC 1 has a Diploma in Case Management plus a Certificate III in Disability Studies, worked in NSW group homes, previously HACC case worker with BCS; LAC 2 also has a Diploma in Case Management plus a Diploma in Community Services, previously worked in the BCS Disability Services Unit; LAC 3 has an Associate Diploma in Sports Science, previously worked as Recreation Program Coordinator with the YMCA as well as extensive support worker experience including with people self managing their support).

An analysis of the total project period June 2006 to October 2007 indicates that 219/272 weeks of LAC staff time were actually filled. The deficit therefore equates to approximately 20% of available staff time where a position was vacant. The LAC Manager has therefore done an enormous job not only covering the various vacant periods but also having to complete the recruitment, selection and induction periods numerous times. The actual amount of available staff time should be kept in mind when assessing outputs and outcomes in later sections of this report.

In terms of the staff team, the LAC Manager and individual LACs all present as suitable appointments and the only additional comment is about an ideal mix for such a team and possibly adding a new person with experience in the children's area with a professional/therapy or educational background.

The LAC Manager reports to the Executive Director of BCS Inc for operational purposes and to the partner organizations (Executive Directors of both BCS Inc and WCS Inc) as part of the strategic management of the partnership in accordance with their MOU. The two Executive Director positions have been stable throughout the period of the tender process and Agreement.

5.4 Overview of Implementation Phases

5.4.1 Set up phase January – June 2006

The LAC Manager was appointed in February 2006 and quickly established the foundation for the new LAC initiative as follows:

- Relationship building, information and education sessions were held
- Offices were located and established in the target locations
- Four new Local Area Coordinators were appointed by a panel comprising the two Executive Directors and LAC Manager. Induction and initial training was completed before the end of June
- LAC duty statements, eligibility and framework documents were prepared
- Generic policies and procedures were adopted from the employing organization and a range of new management and information systems developed for LAC
- Strategies for obtaining consumer feedback were discussed but not finalised at this stage, apart from direct LAC Manager contact with all people supported and clear statements re service user rights and complaints processes.
- A range of communication and marketing strategies were employed, including brochures and information sessions
- Links to other service providers were established

5.4.2 Implementation phase March 2006 – June 2006 and Operational phase July 2006 – November 2007

Key implementation activities completed during this period include:

- Official and local office launches in August 2006

- Maintenance of core staffing, requiring a time consuming series of ongoing recruitment, orientation and induction efforts. In addition, the employment context in the ACT required an upgrade of the salary levels of the LACs in October 2007 in order to safeguard staffing levels and continuity.
- Community information, awareness and partnership development (there is evidence of extensive and strategic effort in this area)
- Provision of LAC support to a steadily increasing number of new people and ongoing efforts to stimulate new referrals
- Supervision and support of LACs as well as development of the LAC team
- Regular reporting of progress to all parties
- A strategic review of progress on 16-17 July 2007 involving senior DACT staff, BCS and WCS Executive Directors and LAC Manager and staff, facilitated by the independent evaluator. (See Appendix 4 of Full Report for a copy of minutes.) This process enabled a review of the LAC Framework and eligibility statements, design of local areas, selection and supervision of LACs, key linkages/protocols, evaluation planning and a public communication strategy. This was an extremely important and productive meeting. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the revised LAC Program brochure.
- Preparation of data and arrangements for the external evaluation in November 2007

5.5 Program budget and expenditure

Funding amounts set out in the Agreement include:

6 th January	- 30th June 2006	\$250,000
1 st July 2006	- 30th June 2007	\$500,000
1 st July 2007	- 30 th June 2008	\$500,000

Reports provided by BCS Inc for the entire contract period to 31st October 2007 indicate that 83% of contract funds have been allocated to this date. The budget process for 2008/9 needs to establish suitable indexation arrangements as well as salary levels that are sufficient to recruit and retain staff in the ACT context.

5.6 Context of reform of the disability system in the ACT

The ACT Disability Service Delivery System is currently under review: a series of public consultations were held between September – November 2007 and a number of proposed service system models have been generated for further consideration. A consistent theme throughout that report is around the need for quality information complemented by active support at the early stages of contact with the system. Discussions about the future of LAC will therefore take place in this context of system reform and public discussion about what the overall system should look like and function.

6. Summary of Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall finding of this external evaluation is that the LAC program in the ACT has been well implemented and achieved a sound level of progress over the first 17 months. This is especially so given the challenges of establishing a new program in the ACT service delivery system where there is reported to be a significant level of unmet demand, a high level of community expectation to receive specialist disability services and also a workforce shortage, with keen competition for staff.

The clear strength of the program has been the very high level of support from individuals and families who have been supported by LAC, along with the good demonstration of a wide range of beneficial outcomes, each in the context of a uniquely developmental relationship. Challenges remain with developing and sustaining ongoing partnerships with service providers and the strategic interface with DACT, with the good work so far needing to be strategically taken to the next step. The development and communication of an evidence base around the benefits of the LAC approach to individuals, families, communities and the overall disability system continues to be a high priority.

All aspects of implementation have been undertaken in a methodical manner and in general accordance with the underlying values and principles of the LAC approach. This is not to say that implementation has been a smooth process – quite the contrary, as each step has thrown up a new set of challenges to be met, particularly around staffing and continuity. The top priority at present therefore is to consolidate the current staffing team.

A unique feature of the LAC program in the ACT is that it is being delivered under contract through the community sector, as opposed to being delivered directly by government as it is in other Australian states and territories. This has presented a further set of both challenges and opportunities, particularly around interface with government issues.

The learning from this project will therefore provide important information in the national and international context for others considering this type of approach. It is considered that the sound progress so far provides a suitable foundation on which to build plans for the continuation and further expansion of this approach in the ACT.

Recommendation 1:

That the current LAC program continue on a recurrent basis from July 2008 and that this decision be communicated to the sector by February 2008.

Main findings and further specific recommendations follow each of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation.

Project design and implementation

The evaluation found that all aspects of initial set up and implementation were generally effective and in accordance with the specifications of the Service and Funding Agreement. A suitable LAC Manager was appointed to drive the process, appropriate offices in Gungahlin and Woden Valley were established and an initial LAC team appointed and inducted. Although not a focus for this evaluation, it is understood that a Memorandum of Understanding was established between the two host agencies BCS and WCS and a suitable overall governance framework was observed to be in place.

Staff turnover has been a problem especially for one of the LAC positions and the LAC Manager and BCS Executive Director collectively have worked hard to maintain core staffing and service delivery, including a key recent strategic decision to review salary scales which may well have prevented a critical loss of staff that would have seriously damaged the credibility of the program. When examining the project outputs and outcomes below, the vacancy factor of nearly 1 full time FTE over the past 12 months needs to be taken into account. It is considered that the efforts of the LAC Manager in particular to maintain continuity of support to individuals and families has been exemplary.

Recommendation 2:

Planning for 2008/9 and onwards to take into account a review of budget requirements including a need for a clear staff recruitment and retention strategy.

A strategic review and planning meeting was convened by DACT in July 2007 involving the LAC program, key DACT staff and the evaluator. This meeting was able to clarify several essential issues and also to scope the evaluation process. In the overall context of project implementation, this meeting was a crucial milestone and represented a strong commitment to a partnership approach. It was clear that standard contract management processes were not sufficient for this purpose and that a regular strategic planning and review forum is required.

Recommendation 3:

That a LAC Steering Committee be established, consisting of DACT and BCS/WCS representatives. The brief of the Committee would be to oversee the strategic implementation of LAC in the ACT, including such matters as DACT policy and strategic directions, "connection " of the LAC community level response, representation of LAC in formal meetings/advocacy and consultations, data to inform planning and areas where joint partnerships are required. Meetings to be held monthly initially commencing in February 2008.

Review of program processes and style of service delivery

Individuals and families reported a whole range of pathways to LAC contact and feedback from agencies also demonstrated the outcomes of intentional efforts by the LACs to promote the program in the community.

An important finding was that DACT staff typically had contact with LAC in difficult circumstances and would benefit from a more balanced range of information. All groups interviewed however, had a good grasp of the goals and objectives of the LAC role.

When asked a series of questions about what had been useful or problematic about LAC contact as well as general feedback on LAC staff, offices and style of service delivery, overwhelmingly the feedback from individuals and families was positive. They generally see LACs as personal, positive and approachable, providing moral support, easy to communicate with and convenient to deal with. They saw the information and ideas provided as then turning into something and progressing (e.g. "there is a purpose to it", "getting things moving", "things get done that I am striving for") as well as the thinking of LACs being in tune with their own (e.g. "their personality is not closed up, more concerned with what you want not what they want").

Most individuals and families responded that there was nothing problematic with LAC in a major sense, or mentioned matters such as change of LACs, part time hours, signage or office entry arrangements. Other agencies were also complementary about the style and approach of the LAC team, with the LACs generally being seen to be approachable, open, presentable and professional. A few issues were mentioned around local area boundaries and access as well as retention of staff. DACT staff suggested improvements in areas such as understanding of LAC in the sector, clarity of the LAC planning approach when in joint meetings with DACT, the LAC role around local information and providing some good community building examples.

Feedback from those involved in providing or supporting LACs was generally around local area boundaries and access, staff retention and information/understanding in the sector.

Recommendation 4:

That the current style and approach of the LAC program continue.

Individual and family level outcomes

Due to the highly individualized nature of LAC support and the broad range of variables in play, the approach taken was for the LAC staff to describe outcomes for all 47 people as part of a comprehensive table. Interviews with 10 of the people (and 3 carers) and some of the agencies then assisted to further validate some of this data. Specifically, 8/10 individuals and families interviewed reported a range of areas where the LACs had made a positive difference to their lives, with these outcomes spanning across the key areas of information and access to informal and formal support systems, as well as increased levels of participation in the community. The three people interviewed that were parents also reported the positive impacts for the whole family (e.g. "lessened the load for them as I am not worrying as much about him").

The range of impacts for those interviewed ranged from moderate (e.g. now receiving a Carers Allowance; accessing a sporting club; resolving sensitive issues in his local community; now receiving informal volunteer support; increased circle of friends) to what could be considered major impacts (eg stabilizing essential home supports from 3 to 2 providers and having more consistent support; less drinking and depression; advocating for and supporting a man to get back to his home rather than an aged care facility, after he felt "trapped in hospital"; supporting a man to maintain his tenancy and prevent him from being evicted).

The range of reported LAC strategies and outcomes reflects very positively on the work of the LACs, their operating framework and the positive difference they have made to individuals and families.

A suitable range of strategies is evident (e.g. getting to know people and developing relationships, information, advocacy, access to informal community and generic supports as well as formal services, planning, building networks and valued roles such as work and volunteering, coordination, partnerships and collaboration with organisations and groups, access to training, skills and leadership development.

There is no direct evidence of any primary focus on or preference for disability services or funding rather than starting with informal and community based support, other than the one presenting critical situation of essential home help services required to maintain health and safety in a person's own home.

Community level outcomes

Comprehensive data was made available to the evaluator as evidence of a wide range of strategies to promote LAC and to develop partnerships and opportunities with community groups and other organisations. Three case examples were provided of particular initiatives that highlighted differing aspects of this role: i.e. an interagency committee and forum for school leavers and post school options; a partnered local community event with the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre; and an ACT wide disability support worker event. Outcomes from two of these projects were verified by other agencies interviewed. Overall the data from the community level strategies does reflect sound progress in this area but there remains considerable work to be done to not only build on but also extend the foundations so far (e.g. into some of DACT's new target areas such as business, sports and the arts.)

Recommendation 5:

That the work of LAC to develop and strengthen community level responses continue and be extended to include groups such as business, sporting and arts.

Service system level outcomes

Although it is too early in the project to properly measure this aspect with any certainty, the analysis of the outcomes data did indicate indirectly that approximately 11/47 people could be considered at significant risk of the home situation breaking down or there being a major threat to their health and well being (or that of their aging carer). It was also significant to note the number of people being supported to maintain their own independent lifestyle in their own homes, generally without significant specialist disability system supports.

Recommendation 6:

That DACT and LAC work jointly to categorise some of the systems level needs and impacts of the LAC program, specifically around people who may present as requiring additional services or resources, in order to build the "value for money" evidence of the LAC approach.

Individual and family output data

A total of 47 people have been provided with ongoing LAC support, with a further 47 people receiving time limited information and advocacy support. The target output was up to 40 individuals and families for 2006/7 and up to 80 for 2007/8. The level achieved can be seen to be quite satisfactory given that the adjusted output target to the end of November 2007 is 56 and also that the program has been the equivalent of 1 FTE short for the past 12 months. An additional important finding was that the timeliness data reported by the LACs for each of the 47 people indicated that for all people the response time was within 48 hours.

The age breakdown of those people provided with ongoing LAC support is as follows: 0-5 years (1), 6-17 years (10), 18-21 years (9), 22-35 years (11) and 36 years plus (16). A suitable range of ages and types of disabilities is represented, with the exception of preschool and young children who present as under-represented as a group. (i.e. only 1 child under 5 years of age and a further 10 between 6-17 years).

The numbers across the two areas (i.e. 21 in Gungahlin and 26 in Woden Valley) reflect to a degree the staff vacancies in the Gungahlin office but also the recent spike in referrals for the Woden Valley office in November 2007. It is considered that at this rate, a projected 65-70 people would be registered by the end of June 2008 and that it would be reasonable to expect a continued increase in 2008/9 to a level of 120-140 people as LAC became more established and was no longer known as a "pilot project". In addition to the individual and family output data, the current wording in the Service Agreement also needs clarification regarding requirements for annual reviews and measurement of community attitudes.

Recommendation 7:

That a specific strategy be developed to provide information and develop partnerships around the under- represented population of young children. This may include DACT brokering meetings with Child and Family Centres and mainstream education as well as exploring the potential of departmental contract management with children's services and family support agencies

Recommendation 8:

That the LAC output targets for 2008/9 be in the range of 120-140 people registered for ongoing support and that the next Service Agreement clarify requirements regarding annual reviews/feedback and measurement of community attitudes.

Systemic barriers to the promotion and uptake of LAC in the ACT

Individuals and families as well as other agencies highlighted the need for LAC to be better known, with agencies adding the issues of competition and siloing between agencies and services in the ACT and competition for funding and staff.

Those directly involved in delivering and managing the LAC program identified systemic barriers to include the relationship with DACT (e.g. "lack of visible, practical support"), lack of support from some parts of the sector (e.g. Child and Family Centre, child cares, regional community service), getting information to agency staff and families directly without being filtered, wariness about being a "pilot."

DACT staff identified time taken to establish the service and staff remuneration as being relevant issues. These more systemic and strategic issues are covered under the intent of Recommendation 2 and the new LAC Steering Committee.

Contribution of the program's governance arrangements to the effectiveness of the model

There was general consensus across all groups that LAC was better located in the community sector rather than through DACT. Those involved directly with delivering LAC can see the benefits of the BCS infrastructure (and its associated community programs) as the lead organization, however the WCS role in the partnership does not yet appear to be as well developed with "value added" and the MOU would benefit from review (as was intended with quarterly meetings). Strategically, BCS is not represented at a senior level in disability related forums which presents as a strategic gap – this could well be filled by the more direct leadership role of WCS in that sector (but in turn

the Executive Director would need to be more directly connected to the program than appears at present). There is evidence however of a recent increase in referrals from WCS and also the most recent LAC appointment actually came through a WCS recruitment process and was directed to LAC (which is clearly valued adding).

Recommendation 9:

That the Memorandum of Understanding underpinning the current BCS and WCS governance arrangements be formally reviewed, in order to build on the progress so far and add further value.

LAC as an “access pathway option” or a portal/gateway to all ACT based disability services

This matter was clarified and discussed in the context of the evaluation findings and also the current DACT process of consultation and review of service system models. It was agreed to continue with the current pathway arrangements.

Recommendation 10:

That LAC continue as an “access pathway option” to ACT based disability services and its role not be expanded as a single gateway or portal.

Can a community based LAC program be an effective service delivery model in the ACT?

All respondents supported the notion that a community based LAC program could be an effective service delivery model in the ACT, with the qualification from one person that the program would need to maintain its effectiveness. From the perspective of the evaluator and evidence from other jurisdictions (notably Western Australia), it is considered that the model could work very effectively in the ACT context provided there was clear and effective strategic management of the overall process.

Is the model sound and can it be replicated in its current form in other regions in the ACT?

There was a general sense from other agencies and those directly involved with the LAC program, that the current model was sound and could be replicated but not necessarily with all six community service providers in the ACT as this would likely lead to very different versions of LAC.

There is an inter-relationship between the issue of current local area boundaries and projections of numbers, ie should the next steps include a widening of existing boundaries as well? It was considered that the current boundaries should be retained for the present time but be reviewed in light of the actual uptake and the outputs required for 2008/9.

Recommendation 11:

That the current local area boundaries remain and be reviewed in June 2008, with possible extension as needed to adjoining areas (including a relocation of offices if required).

A range of future options were considered, in the context of the evaluation findings and also the current DACT process of consultation and review of service system models.

Of particular relevance was the consideration of the current DACT Information Service and the significant potential overlap with an expanded LAC program. As part of overall service system synergy and rationalization, there was in principle agreement amongst DACT and BCS/WCS for consideration of the eventual transfer of the Information Service as part of a plan for the staged expansion of LAC across the ACT.

Recommendation 12:

That a staged expansion plan be developed for ACT wide coverage of LAC during the 3 year period 2009-2012, building on the current foundation of governance and expertise. As part of this plan, the DACT Information Service to be transferred along with the associated resources, at an appropriate point of consolidation and coverage.

Remaining operational issues for consideration as recommended program improvements

A further series of more operational issues were identified as part of the evaluation, that would benefit from consideration as program improvements. These are included in the body of the Full Report (Internal) and were discussed as part of the workshop on preliminary evaluation findings and recommendations. These included such matters as supervision records and team processes, local area profiles and annual plans, staff selection processes, LAC role in advocacy, LAC hosted "events" and LAC training.

7. Appendices

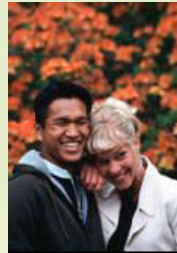
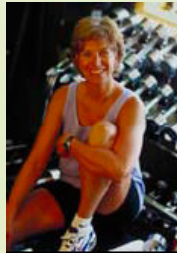
The only Appendix to this report is the LAC Program Brochure attached. Further detailed appendices that are covered in the Full Report (Internal) include:

- 1.1 Schedule of interviews
- 1.2 File of key documents
- 1.3 LAC staffing timeline June 06- Oct 07
- 1.4 Minutes of LAC/DACT planning meeting July 2007
- 1.5 Table of individual and family level outcomes
- 1.6 Examples of community level outcomes
- 1.7 Profile of individuals referred to LAC for ongoing support
- 1.8 Monthly referrals for ongoing support
- 1.9 Monthly contacts for information/advocacy
- 1.10 Summary list of community and interagency presentations

Current LAC Program Brochure

local Area

COORDINATION



Supporting people with a disability in the ACT

**Would you like help to access local services, community groups
or perhaps try a new sport or hobby?**

Would you like to make changes in your life e.g. A new place to live, a new job or new friends?

Would you like to increase your confidence and ability to speak on your own behalf?

**We can support you by providing information to assist you to
make decisions and to plan for your future.**

**We can provide support to help you and your family find options
and make choices about education, accommodation,
employment and leisure needs.**

We can assist you to become more involved in your local community.

We can visit you at home, meet you in the community, talk to you on the phone, or you can visit our offices.

All discussions are private and confidential.

The Local Area Coordination Charter

To develop partnerships with individuals and families as they build and pursue their goals and dreams for a meaningful life and with local communities to strengthen their capacity to include people with disabilities as valued citizens.

Description of the Local Area Coordination Program

"To build individual, family and community self sufficiency so that individuals with a disability can achieve what they want to achieve, live how they want to live and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community."

Local Area Coordination promotes:

- Self management
- Personal advocacy
- Family support and
- Community development.

Local Area Coordinators aim to support local people with disabilities and their families in their local communities. Therefore the shape of the service is deliberately kept flexible to respond to people's changing needs. The development of local knowledge and a commitment to working in a defined geographical area with the people, community members and service providers who live in that community makes enduring relationships possible.

Local Area Coordination Framework

Local Area Coordination operates at the level of individual, family and community and is supported by principles, policies and procedures which emphasise the development of self sufficiency as an outcome for those people in receipt of Local Area Coordination support.

Local Area Coordination will promote:

- Focus on a meaningful life and family leadership
- Emphasis on strengthening community capacity and less on funding
- Greater emphasis on the principles of planning for the future, importance of personal networks, importance of community connections, complementary role of services and partnerships
- Stronger emphasis for family leadership, work with communities to support inclusion and the valued contribution of people with disabilities.

Eligibility for the program

An individual must have a physical, intellectual, cognitive and/or sensory disability and require sustained assistance.

An individual must be a resident of the Woden Valley or Gungahlin areas.

Individuals must be under the age of 65 at the time they request support.

Individuals may access in the short-term for provision of information, advocacy, advice and or options.

Individuals may access medium- to long-term support of Local Area Coordination to ensure that plans and goals are achieved.

Support will be provided to individuals and families through direct contact with Local Area Coordination and not via a third party.

Priority will be given to individuals and families not accessing other funded services or without a substantial ongoing relationship with a service provider.

Support is not available to people who live in supported accommodation or are in receipt of funding for services similar to those provided by Local Area Coordination.

Key principles of Local Area Coordination

- As citizens, people with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as all other people to participate and contribute to the life of the community.
- People with disabilities and their families are in the best position to determine their own needs and goals, and to plan for the future.
- Family, friends and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.
- People with disabilities and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be their own most powerful and enduring leaders, decision makers and advocates.
- Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and to gain more control over their lives.
- Communities are enriched by the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, and these communities are the most important way of providing friendship, support and a meaningful life to people with disabilities and their families and carers.
- The lives of people with disabilities and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred supports and services and control the required resources, to the extent that they desire.
- Services provided by Government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a meaningful life for people with disabilities.
- Partnerships between individuals, families and carers, communities, governments, service providers and the business sector are vital in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities have a life-long capacity for learning, development and contribution.

Role of Local Area Coordination

Develop relationships with people with disabilities and their families.

Work with individuals, families and communities in a way that supports the inclusion of people with disabilities and values the contribution of all people.

Manage our resources to ensure a high degree of accountability in Local Area Coordination practice to individuals, families, the local community and Disability ACT.

Promote self advocacy and provide access to independent advocacy support when required.

Support people with disabilities and their families to:

- Plan, develop and pursue their goals and dreams;
- Access information through a variety of means;
- Maintain, build and strengthen personal networks and community connections;
- Access formal services and ;
- Design and engage informal supports;

Provide:

- Accurate and timely information;
- Options for people with disabilities and their families to engage in training and development that supports their central position in influencing positive change in their communities;
- Disability ACT with qualitative/quantitative information about gaps in local supports, services and systemic issues.

Local Area Coordinators aim to:

- Provide information to individuals and families that is accurate and timely, through a variety of means. This will allow people to make appropriate decisions and to gain control in their lives;
- Build and maintain working relationships with individuals and families, staying in regular contact and giving an opportunity to communicate and honour their journey;
- Support and provide practical assistance to identify and clarify needs, goals and strengths;
- Encourage individuals and their families to drive and steer the direction of Local Area Coordination support;
- Assist to plan for the future;
- Promote positive change and benefits that are sustainable;
- Build on individuals' and families' informal support structures;
- Increase participation in the local community, then the boarder community;
- Ensure that formal services, either government or community, complement and support the families, community and informal support structures;
- Promote that people with disabilities advocate on their own behalf and provide advocacy support when required. Promote self management for people with disabilities and their families;
- Assist linking to community – Local Area Coordination's focus is on informal or natural supports/ relationships that occur in the community. Community supports for individuals and their families will not necessarily be traditional disability support services;
- Support linking to community mentors in sports groups, community groups, local businesses and increase people's participation in their local and the ACT community;
- Develop and increase the community's capacity to improve levels of inclusion through the provision of education/knowledge and raising awareness to the needs and goals of people with disabilities;
- Assist to remove any barriers that may exist, whether they be physical/structural or community attitude;
- Monitor the quality and quantity of formal services that individuals and their families receive;

Local Area Coordination Geographic Boundaries of Eligibility

Woden Valley	Gungahlin
Hughes	Amaroo
Swinger Hill	Bonner
Woden	Casey
Phillip	Crace
Chifley	Forde
Torrens	Franklin
Pearce	Gold Creek
Lyons	Gungahlin
Garran	Hall
Farrer	Harcourt Hill
Isaacs	Harrison
O'Malley	Kenny
Curtin	Mitchell
Mawson	Ngunnawal
	Nicholls
	Palmerston
	Throsby
	Yerrabi

Local Area Coordination support available to residents of suburbs listed above.

If you want to know more about how we can assist you, please contact your Local Area Coordinator.

Gungahlin Local Area Coordination

Office Address: Suite 1.3 The Marketplace Gungahlin
33 Hibberson Street
Gungahlin ACT 2912

Telephone: (02) 6255 7911
Facsimile: (02) 6255 7922
Email: debbie.lac@belcomserv.com.au
tamarah.lac@bcsact.com.au

Postal Address: Suite 1.3 The Marketplace
33 Hibberson Street
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Woden Valley Local Area Coordination

Office Address: 79 Dundas Court
Phillip ACT 2606

Telephone: (02) 6260 5622
Facsimile: (02) 6260 5633
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marc.lac@belcomserv.com.au

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localArea

COORDINATION

This program is provided by the Belconnen Community Service Inc. and Woden Community Service Inc. partnership and funded by Disability ACT.



**Belconnen
Community
Service Inc.**

