

Pathways 5 Presentation

Learning Disability (LD) — A National Coordinated Approach

Authors

Mike Spurr, Jenny Shaw & Anna Mungovan - Australian Learning Disability Association (ALDA)

Abstract

Learning **disability** (LD) exists and has a very real impact on most facets of a person's life. Some of us are undertaking education as students with LD. A number of us have been, or are involved in LD related research, whilst others are involved in supporting and accommodating the requirements of students with LD.

Learning disability however, requires understanding and resources at a much greater level than currently exists within our country. People with LD and their families also need access to education, services and support of a national standard. This paper will review the past, discuss current issues, offer some solutions and introduce a mechanism that can provide a national coordinated approach.

There has been some good work done in places around Australia, but it has happened in isolation because our country is so vast and our Commonwealth Government education system does not recognise learning **disability** (even though it is clearly defined under the Disability Discrimination Act). The United Kingdom, Canada and USA education systems have all recognised learning disability, and provide comprehensive services, for a long time.

The challenge for us is to put learning **disability** firmly on the Commonwealth Government's education agenda, provide a register for services and information, convey initiatives to a national level and develop nationally recognised and accredited standards and guidelines. The Australian Learning Disability Association is the tool that can assist us to meet this challenge through a national coordinated approach.

Discussion Forum

Background

- Learning disability exists and is very real.
- Learning disability requires formal recognition and resources.
- People with learning disability need access to services and support.

Aims

To identify the issues, offer some solutions and introduce a mechanism that can

convey initiatives.

Problems

- Learning “disability” is not on the agenda nationally.
- There are huge gaps within our current education system.
- Existing learning disability services are not coordinated - Our big country and the resulting isolation of resources.
- Our comparison to the United Kingdom, USA and Canada in terms of policy & standards is appalling.

Solution - Where to from here?

- Why it is necessary to push the “Disability” label.
- Put learning disability on the agenda at Commonwealth government level.
- Forge intra-national links.
- Provide information and identify the locations of services & support.
- Give learning disability issues and solutions a national voice.
- Develop and implement nationally recognised definitions, guidelines and standards for accurate assessment.

A Tool

The Australian Learning Disability Association (ALDA)

1. Goals of ALDA are to:

- Create a climate of public understanding, awareness and acceptance of learning disability nationally;
- Lobby at a national level to promote the issue of learning disability in education, government and community sectors;
- Inform people with learning disability of their rights under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- Provide educative information relating to learning disability;
- Evaluate and disseminate information on current research and resources on learning disability;

- Promote education and training on learning disability for educational institutions and their teachers;
- Liaise with local, regional, state and international organisations that have an interest in learning disabilities;
- Retain an up to date web based Register that lists the location and contact details of Australian organisations, services and resources that focus on learning disability.

1. Function – how can ALDA achieve these goals?
2. How ALDA can be accessed and used – membership?