

**The Australian Sociological Association**

**CRITICAL DISABILITY STUDIES THEMATIC GROUP**

**NEWS**

Welcome everyone to the first Critical Disability Studies Group Newsletter for 2011. We had a very successful year in 2010. Some of our most marked achievements include the official TASA Executive ratification of the *Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation* policy alongside the redesign of the TASA website in line with disability access principles and guidelines.

The profile of the group has also grown and we currently have over 17 members from across the country. We would like to thank you all for your ongoing support throughout 2010. Your feedback has been vital for us as convenors to inform the TASA Executive of the critical issues facing Australian sociologists with disability.

In this issue, we will report on the CDS annual meeting held at the TASA conference in December 2010. The members took a number of decisions and we provide a short summary of the actions taken thus far as a result. A short conference report is also included, along with the list of papers presented both in the CDS stream and within other thematic groups, which we hope you will find of interest and relevance to the group.

Most significantly, this year, there are two main areas of concern for the CDS group. The first is the re-endorsement of the CDS group by the TASA Executive. As discussed below, TASA requires all thematic groups to seek re-endorsement every three years and ours is up for renewal. To maintain our growing mark within the broader field of sociology in Australia, we encourage you all to renew your TASA membership. The full details of this process are provided on page 5 of this newsletter.

Also on page 5, you will notice a brief discussion about the ERA consultation process. This is particularly important for all to participate and submit recommendations of disability journals, both as a way to gain recognition for the area as a field of scholarly inquiry, but also to ensure that the extremely high level of research and scholarship coming out of the field is appropriately recognised. All of the contact details are provided on pages 5 & 6 along with the submission deadlines.

We hope that you find the discussions and information both useful and interesting. We look forward to working with you all throughout 2011 to further develop the CDS group and build the group's profile within the Australian Sociological Association.

Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic

**CDS Annual Meeting Report  
TASA 2010 (Macquarie University, 06 – 09 December 2009)**

The CDS group held its annual meeting on the final day of the 2010 Annual TASA Conference. Due to accessibility issues, some of the members were unable to attend the meeting. These issues are outlined in detail in the minutes taken attached here. As you will note from the minutes, there were extensive discussions surrounding the implementation of the new *Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation Policy*. While CDS members supported its ratification within the TASA organisation, members felt that after attending the conference over the last three days, little of the policy had been implemented. Key issues identified include a) the lack of information provided on the conference website to inform conference participant's planning to attend, b) again, the lack of information provided within the conference program in terms of accessibility and mobility, c) the ad hoc programming of papers and plenaries that resulted in a number of presentation 'clashes' for members that were presenting two or more papers; and finally and most importantly, d) that the rescheduling of the disability studies plenary alongside the carer plenary directly diminished the participation of conference delegates who had a possible interest in the field. All of these issues have been raised directly with the new President, Debra King, and a letter outlining our concerns and proposed recommendations is attached for your information.

We would greatly appreciate any advice, information or suggestions that you may have to progress this agenda as we work with the TASA Executive, TASA Administrative Staff, the Annual Conference Organising Committee including the contracted organisation providing conference organisation support over the coming year. Please email Karen at [k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au](mailto:k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au) directly.

CDS Participation at the 2010 Conference:

The following papers were presented at the 2010 Annual Conference within the CDS Stream. There are however a range of other papers that sit within the discipline of disability studies that were presented in other streams. The full program is available via the following link:

<http://www.soc.mq.edu.au/tasa-conference/draft%20program/TASA%20concurrent%20sessions%20final%20draft.pdf>

**Michael Wearing**

Who Is Responsible for the Death of James Gear? Police shootings and mental health reform in an era of 'networked security'

**Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic**

Human Rights and the Global South: The case of disability

**Genee Marks**

Watchers on the Edge: Ensuring rigour and authenticity in co-research with people with intellectual disabilities

**Felicity Grey**

Identifying 'Mental Illness': Anti-'stigma' campaigns, legibility and benevolent othering

**Plenary:**

**Leanne Dowse, Russell Shuttleworth, Nikki Wedgwood, Karen Soldatic, Felicity Grey, Helen Meekosha**

Emerging Research Methodological Frameworks in Critical Disability Studies

Early Contact with 2011 Organising Committee:

We have written formally to the President, Debra King, who has directly forwarded our letter to the 2011 Conference Organising Committee at the University of Newcastle and also the contracted organisation providing conference support for TASA annual events. As convenors, we have also made contact with the TASA 2011 Conference Organising Committee. Extensive information outlining accessibility requirements have been provided. We have been reassured on several occasions that this forthcoming conference will be accessible and that the TASA Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation Policy will be adhered to. Conference information updates on the website should contain sections relevant to accessibility, mobility and travel, and accommodation in a timely fashion so that sociologists with disabilities can plan their attendance effortlessly or at least on par with their able-bodied counterparts. If you find that you are not able to access or find the information you require as the information becomes available on the 2011 conference website, please let us know so that we can follow up on your concerns directly with the conference organisers.

We are hoping, as a result of all of these negotiations, disability scholars, students and activists, both nationally and internationally, feel welcomed and supported to participate in Australia's leading sociological association. The general consensus within the meeting was that these issues were an absolute priority for the CDS group to ensure the longevity of the CDS group within TASA and to build inter-disciplinary links within sociology, both nationally and internationally.

Additionally, members requested that the convenors, Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic, work with the Health Sociology Group to explore opportunities to develop a joint health/disability day to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue. Fran Collyer, the current convenor of the health sociology group, has been contacted and work has begun to further this agenda. At this stage, we have all agreed to target the TASA Annual Conference in 2012, and have had agreement from Professor Carol Thomas to lead this as her work in her latest book, *Sociologies of Disability and Illness*, directly traverses this interface. Carol Thomas will be in Australia at this time as part of an ARC Research Grant.

Australasian Journal of Disability Studies:

At the 2008 CDS inaugural meeting, Gerard Goggin and Martin Sullivan discussed with the group the possibility of establishing an Australasian Journal of Disability Studies. In early 2010, as noted in the March 2010 newsletter, we were advised by Martin and Gerard that the journal was progressing, albeit slowly. As requested at the CDS meeting at the Annual TASA Conference in 2010 we have again followed up with Martin and Gerard about the journal's progress. Unfortunately, Martin has advised that the negotiations with the original publisher have not progressed as planned and that they are now seeking other publishers.

To support this important initiative, members agreed at the last annual meeting that the CDS membership will provide support. We will keep you updated with information as it comes available in the coming months.

**CDS ACHIEVEMENTS 2011**

TASA Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation Policy

In early 2010 a working group was established to develop an organisational policy to support the active participation of sociologists with disability within the TASA Organisation. After several months of deliberation, discussion and debate, the TASA Executive endorsed the policy put forward in

its entirety. While much of the policy focuses on participation and inclusion at the Annual TASA Conference, other key areas, such as the waiver of entrance/registration costs for support worker attendance at TASA events, are also included. The full policy is available at the following link: <http://www.tasa.org.au/uploads/2008/12/the-australian-sociological-association-3-2010-11-october-10.pdf>

The policy is to be reviewed on a continue basis and the CDS group will provide ongoing feedback to the TASA Executive on its 'realisation in practice'. Thus, CDS members will play an active role in monitoring its implementation within the organisation.

We encourage you all to contact Karen Soldatic at [k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au](mailto:k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au) in an ongoing manner with any issues that may have arisen when interacting with TASA as an organisation and its website.

#### TASA Web Access

As part of the developmental work of the Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation Policy, accessible web design was included. This occurred simultaneously with the TASA web re-design and development and as such, most Level 2 access requirements, as outlined within the W3C Accessible Guidelines have been met (see <http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility>). Additionally, the within the membership registration form, all TASA members will be able to inform TASA administrators of their access requirements to ensure that information sent out is provided in the appropriate formats.

#### ARC Discovery Research Grants

CDS members have been highly successful in securing ARC Discovery Grants in the last round (beginning 2011). Projects include:

#### **Disability and ability: How young people with impairments make the transition to adulthood**

*Dr Nicole M Wedgwood, Dr Russell P Shuttleworth, Prof Gwynnyth M Llewellyn*

Compared to their able-bodied peers, 15-29 year olds with disabilities have an increased risk of negative social, physical and mental health outcomes. By analysing the life histories of 100 young people with physical impairments and tracking their development over four years, this project will explore how to reduce these risks.

#### **Disability in Rural Australia**

*Prof Barbara Pini, Dr Karen Soldatic, A/Prof Helen Meekosha, Prof Carol Thomas*

In rural Australia 21.2 per cent of the population has a disability while in remote areas the number is 22.1 per cent yet rural disabled people are rarely heard in policy debates. This study, mapping the experiences of disabled people in non-metropolitan Australia is consequently of critical importance to government and disability advocacy

## **CDS GROUP RENEWAL**

As part of the thematic group governance framework under the TASA umbrella, all thematic groups are required to seek re-endorsement every three (3) years. As many of you may recall, the CDS group was initially established within TASA in July 2008.

This means that this coming July, the CDS Thematic Group conveners, Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic, are required to submit a proposal to the TASA Executive for re-endorsement. As per our original submission, the CDS Thematic Group needs to maintain a membership of 15 TASA members to be approved.

In our experience as conveners, it has been extremely advantageous operating under the TASA umbrella, particularly as the TASA organization provides a range of resources for the groups operation, such as the CDS Group Website and ongoing updates. Further, it provides an avenue to promote disability studies within the broader field of sociology, and build inter-disciplinary networks to expand research in the area.

With the incoming new year, all of our memberships have expired and therefore, we encourage you all to renew your TASA membership. When completing this information online (which should be now fully accessible and if not, please let us know asap) please indicate that you are wishing to be included within the CDS Thematic Group. All TASA members are entitled to join up to three (3) thematic groups as part of your membership registration. To renew your membership please go to the following website: <http://www.tasa.org.au/tasa-members/>.

Helen and Karen will be contacting you all personally closer to the re-endorsement date to gauge your interest in maintaining the CDS Thematic Group.

## **ARC JOURNAL RANKINGS FOR ERA INITIATIVE**

The ARC has begun its consultation process to establish journal rankings within the ERA framework. As per our email in early February, the ARC are calling for individual input into this process. Individuals can nominate new journals and then make the case for an appropriate ranking (A\*, A, B or C). Additionally, individuals can put forward a rationale to raise (or diminish) the ranking of a current journal registered within the ERA framework.

Within the field of Disability Studies no journals are ranked within the top level (A\*) and only two within the second category (A) – *Disability & Society* and *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Given that these are the premier journals within the field, it could easily be argued that these journals should receive an A\* ranking to recognise the high level of international scholarship published within them.

Another concern is the number of journals within the field of Disability Studies which are not currently included within the ERA ranking system, such as *Review of Disability Studies* and *The Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*.

Given that the field of Disability Studies within Australia is not currently recognised within the ERA framework as a discrete field of study, we would like to encourage you all to participate in the

submission process. The growing importance of Disability Studies, as a discrete area of research, can not be ignored if a vast number of submissions are received.

All submissions must be made at the following website:

[http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era\\_2012/review\\_of\\_era10\\_ranked\\_outlet\\_lists.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2012/review_of_era10_ranked_outlet_lists.htm)

### **Key dates for Phase 1**

Public consultation opens	14 February 2011
New journal and conference submission closes	8:00am (AEDT), 21 March 2011
Public consultation closes	8:00am (AEST) on 4 April 2011

### **RESEARCH PROFILES: Dr. Peter Gibilisco, Honorary Fellow University of Melbourne.**

I enrolled in a TAFE Diploma in Business Studies (Accounting). I hadn't attempted HSC while at High school, so university study was out of the picture for the time being. My years at TAFE were a lot of fun, giving me the inspiration to tackle life with vigour once again. The memories of TAFE are joyous, and there are many times that I wish that time would return. Dandenong TAFE was a place where discrimination was not an issue, allowing me to complete the Diploma unhindered. I still savour the memories of TAFE when I need cheering up.

From there, I took the next step in the academic process, enrolling at the Peninsula campus of Monash University. Monash prides itself on being the workplace of the academically gifted, studious student. I was no longer in control. I had to give to receive. All students felt the pressure to earn higher than average marks. If you want to succeed at university level you have to be a studious student. Monash University quickly put a stop to all my fun and games of the TAFE years, but I started achieving some fair grades.

In 1994, I changed degrees, from Accounting to a double degree in Arts and Accounting. This change saw me placing more emphasis on the study of sociology, rather than accounting. Sociology is a subject dealing with the phenomenon of life and its interaction with society: its societally-based virtues and ideals. Sociology examines the structure of social relationships, and allows one to develop reasons for interdependent and contingent social happenings.

Sociology allowed me to have a belief and confidence that I could achieve my goals, instead of passively accepting the hurtful and negative thoughts of many who argue that most people with disabilities cannot play a meaningful role in society because they are necessarily dependent upon others for many of the most mundane human functions. However, most of these damning thoughts are quickly made to look and sound stupid by most forms of sociological theory. Sociology helped me put my life in perspective. While it may not be a mainstream opinion, it grabbed hold of my mind and inspired me. It also made a lot of sense.

The extra boost I got from sociology not only gave me the drive to complete my Arts degree, but also inspired me to complete the Accounting degree. I graduated in 1997. I continued my studies in sociology in 1997, because I did still not want to face the harsh stereotypical views of many in the world of employment, and the possibility of interviews with employers making decisions on the basis of stereotypes about people with disabilities.

Such discriminatory misjudgements can be damaging, especially to people who have severe disabilities and already suffer from low self-esteem. So I started a Masters qualifying year in sociology at Monash, taking on a broad range of subjects, from sociology to economics and political science. This gave me a greater understanding of how the world works in relation to sociology, and allowed me to develop my own sociological perspective and helped me to become critical of news and current affairs. I completed the Master of Arts degree graduating in April 2000.

I then started what proved to be my most rewarding years as a student, as a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. In the years doing the PhD, I have gained extra motivation from events such as receiving the prestigious June Opie Fellowship in 2001, and a Melbourne Research Scholarship in 2002-04. My work has been published in academic journals such as the Journal of Australian Political Economy, and I also intervene in public debates, presenting my work at major conferences and publishing my work in forums such as On Line Opinion.

My thesis, "The political economy of disablement: a sociological analysis", examines the policy approaches of social democracy, the third way, and neo-liberalism in the contexts of education, employment, and service provision for people with disabilities. Ultimately, I argue, neo-liberal and third way policy approaches result in greater social exclusion for people with disabilities, whereas pragmatic social democracy, provides a means for people with disabilities to empower themselves. I successfully completed my PhD in December 2005, attending my graduation ceremony in March 2006.

Post-Ph.D. my options may have ever so slightly improved, winning the Disability Professionals 'Emerging Leader of the Year' in March 2007. But were the cost-benefits involved with the pursuance of academic excellence, in reality, all worth it? Will this give me the necessary backing to pursue my goals of assisting in the provision of a just and inclusive society for people with disabilities? Are such pursuits beyond me because of my affliction, or do my personal narratives (many are spoken of, in the following book) identify the political hurdles with greater clarity for people with severe physical disabilities?

## **RECENT AUSTRALIAN PUBLICATIONS:**

### **Politics, Disability and Social Inclusion**

Published by: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller

Authored by: Peter Gibilisco

This book exposes the weaknesses and some strengths behind the mixture of Disability and Politics. From its first page (p1) it calls for further debate concerning politics and people with disabilities, as the interaction between the two in many cases is an implicit part of life. It looks at the agendas posed for people with disabilities by different political ideologies.

Therefore, this book makes use of practical examples of outcomes that, I argue, in many cases are directly and indirectly related to policies promoted by government. In too many cases public policies simply cannot consider the essential need for assistance, due to budgetary constraints. The main argument concerning people with disabilities is to focus on the many social and economic imbalances that are the consequences of inadequate public policy.

Current governments have failed to meet the standards set by current disability rights agendas. Instead, many governments have set out on an impulsive and socially negative public policy path. I state (p121): Stretton would dodge such problems by insisting that we don't need more or less government, we just need better government

This book presents a powerful argument, against the stigmas and disutility's unfairly faced by many people with disabilities. For example, as I stated (p125): 'The constant deterioration of my body is a direct effect of my disability, and has left me vulnerable, but not inadequate. My vulnerability is due to a lack of assistance with my disability, for example, now I am having a lot of trouble with life in general and now we should also add the life of an academic professional to this mix, to which life I have unquestionably gained rightful access.

That is, public policy has failed to meet necessary progressive social changes to politics of people with disabilities, and to make society more inclusive.

Available here [http://www.amazon.com/Politics-Disability-Social-Inclusion-different/dp/363929355X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1288146598&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Politics-Disability-Social-Inclusion-different/dp/363929355X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1288146598&sr=1-1)

#### **OTHER AUSTRALIAN PUBLICATIONS:**

Within the field of disability studies, there has been a growing body of work emerging from Australian scholars. Including Peter Gibilisco's most recent book discussed above, other recent Australian book publications include:

Ellis, K. and Kent, M (2010) *Disability and New Media* Routledge, London.

Leipoldt, E. (2010) *Euthanasia and Disability Perspective* VDM Publishing, Verlag.

#### **DISABILITY CONFERENCES AND STREAMS IN 2011**

Both nationally and internationally, there are a number of disability conferences held in addition to new disability streams emerging as part of broader fields of study. Throughout the year, we will try to advise you of forthcoming conferences and also provide you with a range of conference reports from across the globe.

#### **Conference Report:**

##### **Debates in Disability Studies Symposium 1**

**Dr Dan Goodley, Professor of Psychology and Disability Studies  
Manchester Metropolitan University**

The first in a series of symposia focusing on key debates in disability studies took place on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, at Critical Disability Studies @ Manchester Metropolitan University, England.

Introducing the day, Dan Goodley said that he saw the series as an opportunity for 'lively and friendly' debate about the key issues facing disability studies. Over 50 delegates attended the symposia, in the morning Nick Watson (University of Glasgow) argued for a 'critical realist approach'

in disability studies, followed by Dan Goodley (MMU) arguing for 'critical disability studies'. In the afternoon, Bill Hughes presented a paper entitled: *Civilizing modernity and the ontological invalidation of disabled people*, he was followed by Jenny Slater (MMU) who presented on 'Those Pesky Kids: playing around in Disability Studies'.

In the spirit of inclusion and accessibility CDS@MMU aim to podcast many of their public seminars and presentations. They are currently using audiopodcasts as our preferred format because this makes downloading quicker and access easier than video format. For details of the papers from this symposium - and where to find the podcasts - see:

Watson, N. (2011). *Towards a critical realist disability studies*. Paper presented at the Debates in Disability Studies Symposium I. 26th January 2011, Manchester Metropolitan University. Available at:

[http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/Podcasts/weblog/d55df/critical\\_disability\\_studies\\_symposium\\_1\\_-\\_Introduction\\_and\\_Watson\\_presentation.html](http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/Podcasts/weblog/d55df/critical_disability_studies_symposium_1_-_Introduction_and_Watson_presentation.html)

Goodley, D. (2011). *Why we need critical disability studies*. Paper presented at the Debates in Disability Studies Symposium I. 26th January 2011, Manchester Metropolitan University. Available at the following link (see second presentation)

<http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/podcasts/search/?q=disability&sortDirecti...>

Slater, J (2011). *Those Pesky Kids: playing around in Disability Studies*. Paper presented at the Debates in Disability Studies Symposium I. 26th January 2011, Manchester Metropolitan University. and Hughes, B. (2011). *Civilizing modernity and the ontological invalidation of disabled people*. Paper presented at the Debates in Disability Studies Symposium I. 26th January 2011, Manchester Metropolitan University. Both presentations are available together at:

[http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/Podcasts/weblog/82842/critical\\_disability\\_studies\\_symposium\\_1\\_-\\_Slater\\_and\\_Hughes\\_presentations.html](http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/Podcasts/weblog/82842/critical_disability_studies_symposium_1_-_Slater_and_Hughes_presentations.html)

The podcasts can also be accessed at:

<http://podcast.mmu.ac.uk/groups/podcasts/search/?q=disability&sortDirection=reverse&kind=all&sort=date%20%20>

For more information about future symposia contact: [d.goodley@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:d.goodley@mmu.ac.uk) or visit:

<http://cdsmmu.posterous.com/pages/events>

### **Forthcoming Conferences:**

#### **Theorizing Normalcy and the Mundane**

Due to the success of last year's inaugural conference Manchester Metropolitan is again hosting a free two-day conference on: *Theorising Normalcy and the Mundane*. The conference, held in May 2011,

will offer an extensive program from established, new and emerging scholars in the field of Critical Disability Studies. The call for papers is available online at:

<http://disabilityresearchforum.wordpress.com/2010/09/23/theorizing-normalcy-and-the-mundane-2011-call-for-papers/>

### **Disability and the Majority World: Towards a Global Disability Studies**

Manchester University is currently calling for papers for its first international conference on Disability in the Global South. The two day free conference will be held on site at Manchester University from the 7 – 8 July 2011. Papers should cover a range of themes including:

- Poverty and disability
- From North to South: whose discourse? whose strategies?
- The heterogeneity of disability
- Health and rehabilitation
- Development, globalisation and beyond
- Post/neocolonial spaces
- Researching disability across cultures
- Trans-disciplinarity

For all conference information, including registration please visit

<http://disabilityworld.wordpress.com/>

All other information please contact Shaun Grech via email: [shaungrech@gmail.com](mailto:shaungrech@gmail.com)

### **NEXT EDITION: JULY 2011**

We are keen to increase CDS members' contributions to the newsletter. Please contact Karen Soldatic on [k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au](mailto:k.soldatic@curtin.edu.au) with any book reviews, research profiles, call for papers and other relevant information that you may like to add prior to 1 July 2011.

### **Attachment 1:**

**CRITICAL DISABILITY STUDIES THEMATIC GROUP  
TASA 2010 (Macquarie University)  
Thursday, 9 December 2010 (1 – 2pm)  
MINUTES**

1. **Present:** Helen Meekosha (Chair), Karen Soldatic (Minutes), Russell Shuttleworth, Genee Marks, Felicity Grey, Monika Dryburgh, Sarah Carpenter.

**Apologies:** Leanne Dowse, Fiona Kumari Campbell, Michael Bleasdale, Anthony Hogan

2. **Minutes 2009**

Minutes confirmed with the following changes:

- a. Monika Dryburgh, Melbourne University, Present in 2009;

**Action:** Follow up with Martin Sullivan, Gerard Goggin and Fiona Kumari Campbell.

### **3. TASA National Disability Access and Inclusion Policy**

#### **a. Development**

- i. Disability Access and Inclusion Policy was endorsed by the TASA Executive in September 2010 (as per the October newsletter)
- ii. Policy available on the TASA Website
- iii. Policy disseminated to all organisers of TASA events
- iv. Key features of the policy include:
  - 1. Language policy including journal publications (Sociology & Health Sociology Review);
  - 2. TASA Conference guidelines;
  - 3. Public Events and Seminar participation;
  - 4. Website upgrade in line with *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/full-checklist.html>)
  - 5. TASA database update to include relevant information for members; and
  - 6. Recognition of support companion for event participation.

#### **b. Implementation**

##### **i. 2010 conference**

- 1. Despite the recent ratification of the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy by the TASA Executive again, there were significant access and inclusion issues at the 2010 Conference at Macquarie.
- 2. Issues identified prior to the event include:
  - a. No transport information provided for disability access and inclusion;
  - b. Despite receiving the request months in advance, symbols indicating disability accessible accommodation were only uploaded in the last weeks (this disregards that most participants with disability access requirements undergo extensive pre-planning);

- c. Upon registration, many of the participants requested information within the designated field of the on-line registration application however there was no follow up at all;
3. CDS members identified the following issues while in attendance:
- a. No signage within the conference physical space to indicate accessible entry to all lecture theatres/rooms;
  - b. Accessible doors/entries locked on several occasions;
  - c. Distance between the ‘on campus’ accommodation and conference venue – distance quite extensive; minimal signage/directions; whilst hotel was deemed ‘accessible’ staff were unable to provide additional information when asked/required;
  - d. Significant issues were contained within the hard copy program such as the total exclusion of access information, no access symbols designated against each of the rooms for paper sessions, map was illegible and again only included ‘able-bodied’ mobility information.
4. Scheduling of CDS Plenary/Paper Sessions:
- a. The initial program had scheduled the CDS paper sessions and the CDS on at separate times, however, in the final days prior to the conference the scheduling had changed and many of the CDS papers were scheduled at the same time as the CDS Methodology Plenary. When raised with the organising committee, the plenary was changed to a later time slot. However, rather than ‘swapping’ with the other Plenary session scheduled these were now run simultaneously. This meant that there were two competing sessions, which was heightened by the subject matters – care vs disability. Many participants would have been interested in attending both sessions, however, given that ‘care’ is the dominant discourse surrounding disability, this resulted in few participants attending the CDS plenary. Moreover, this effectively silences the ‘voices’ of disabled people participating (as presenters, researchers or research participants) reinforcing hegemonic understandings of the care-disability relationship.

**ACTION: a) Convenors write to the President outlining the list of physical access issues, along with the programming issues that occurred; b) Russell Shuttleworth to write an article for the TASA Nexus Magazine to encourage a dialogue between the ‘care’ group and CDS; c) Karen Soldatic**

**to approach the Chair/s of the Health Sociology Thematic Group about future conference program crossovers for 2011 and d) Karen Soldatic to make contact with the Conference Organising Committee at University of Newcastle to ensure that they have all of the required guidelines and that they are aware of the most recent issues (2010).**

**ii. Website update**

1. The TASA website is currently being upgraded and as part of this process new information will not be added to the CDS Thematic Group page. This should be resolved in the new year (2011);
2. As part of the upgrade a new membership database will be developed so that information pertaining to access, inclusion and participation is readily available for the planning of future events, conferences and publications;
3. E-news mailouts will also be upgraded to meet accessibility standards;

**ACTION: CDS members to monitor accessibility of TASA website over the coming months and advise Karen Soldatic, Co-convenor, if issues arise so that the web developer can be informed.**

**4. Newsletters (3 per annum)**

**a. Contents**

- i. It was agreed that three publications per year was sufficient rather than quarterly as initially suggested in the March 2010 release;

**b. Research profiles**

- i. All agreed that this section could be expanded to include both an 'emerging researcher' and an established researcher;
- ii. These profiles provided both local and international exposure as the distribution list was fairly extensive along with being readily available on the CDS webpage.

**c. Contributions**

- i. Publication required greater contributions from members including personal research profiles, book reviews, short discussion pieces and other material as suggested.

**Action: a) Felicity Grey, Monika Dryburgh, Sarah Carpenter, Russell Shuttleworth and Genee Marks agreed to submit a synopsis of their paper sessions by mid-February 2011 for publication within the March Newsletter;**

**and b) all CDS members to contribute to the newsletter with submitting material for publication throughout 2011.**

## **5. Group Renewal**

### **a. June 2011**

- i.** Each Thematic Group operating under TASA are required to be renewed every three years. Given that the CDS Group was endorsed on 1 June 2008, this means that CDS's thematic group status is up for renewal this coming June 2011. The official head count of 15 active members remains the requirement.
- ii.** The group currently has 16 members and therefore is not in a position to lose any members if seeking renewal for the next three year period. All members are encouraged to renew their membership with the new year (2011) so that the convenors can lodge an application for thematic group renewal.

### **b. Requirements:**

#### **i. Head Count Requirements (15)**

**Action: a) All members to renew their membership for 2011; b) current members to encourage new people to join; and c) Karen and Helen, convenors, to submit an application for Thematic Group renewal to the TASA Executive come May 2011.**

## **6. Convenors**

### **a. Proposal to maintain as is until end 2011**

- i.** Consensus was reached for Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic to maintain the convenor positions for 2011.

## **7. Other Matters Arising**

- a. Felicity Grey** wanted to publicly acknowledge the ongoing production of the CDS newsletter, the work of the convenors in gaining the support of the TASA Executive for the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy and their work throughout the year.

## **Attachment Two:**

### **LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT: DEBRA KING**

7 February 2011

Dr Debra King  
President  
The Australian Sociological Association  
Email: [deb.king@flinders.edu.au](mailto:deb.king@flinders.edu.au)

**RE: Disability Access and Inclusion**

Firstly, the Critical Disability Studies Thematic Group would like to commend the TASA Executive for the recent development and ratification of the *TASA Disability Access, Inclusion and Participation Guidelines*. As you aware, Australian sociologists with disabilities have, over many years, been unable to participate within the TASA organisation and therefore, this strategy is extremely welcomed by many.

On this note, we are writing to raise our concerns about the application of these guidelines. Despite the CDS members' best efforts to provide extensive information and maintain an open dialogue with the TASA conference organisers, disability access, inclusion and participation appears to remain marginal to conference programming. As many of our members experienced at the most recent 2010 conference, there were numerous issues that arose throughout the three day conference which precluded their participation in the conference overall.

1. Accessible transport guidelines on conference website:

As early as January 2010 information was provided directly to the conference organisers to ensure that the transport information, both to/from the conference site and within the conference site, included disability access information. Despite several emails and correspondence, this information was not provided at all on the conference website. As you may be aware, people with mobility impairments generally organise travel arrangements fairly early to ensure that their accessibility requirements will be assured throughout each stage of their journey.

***Thus, the CDS group members request that the conference travel information includes disability accessibility information at the earliest stages to ensure ease of planning for its members.***

2. Conference Accommodation:

Again, requests to the conference organisers to include disability access information (or at least an access symbol alongside each hotel as initially suggested) was not provided until the final weeks prior. As stated above, disabled people require this information very early on so that alternative arrangements can be made if this accommodation does not meet their specific requirements.

***Again, CDS members request that conference accommodation information includes disability accessibility information from the outset so that members can plan accordingly.***

3. Registration Information:

Within the online conference registration information there was a component seeking additional information from participants. CDS members welcomed this initiative. Unfortunately, many of the requests were not follow up in a timely fashion and therefore, many of the members did not receive the information that they required prior to embarking on their journey to the conference. In some instances, individuals flagged that they required additional mobility assistance whilst on-site, however, whether this service was available or not was not feedback.

***CDS members request that any additional information requests are responded to in a timely manner so that the participant can plan appropriately.***

4. Conference Program:

In spite of early correspondence with the conference organisers to ensure that accessibility information was included within the program this did not occur. There were no access symbols to indicate room accessibility, nor information pertaining to accessible personal amenities.

***CDS members request that the conference program include disability accessibility information especially in terms of presentation room accessibility, personal amenities such as toilets and availability of alternative program formats.***

5. Conference Signage:

There was limited signage within the conference area. For example, participants were unaware of disability access to the main lecture theatre. This issue could have been resolved through simple physical signage at the conference. Additionally, for a number of rooms the disability access areas were locked and participants had to seek additional assistance for entry. Again, this issue could have easily been resolved by ensuring that doors were unlocked prior to the beginning of each day.

***CDS members suggest that signage is clearly placed around the conference venue and that rooms are checked for accessibility prior to the start of each day.***

6. Program Scheduling:

The final program had scheduled one of the CDS paper sessions simultaneously with the CDS plenary. When this issue was raised with the conference organisers the plenary session was moved to another time slot. However, rather than ‘swapping’ the CDS plenary with the other scheduled plenary session these were held simultaneously. As a result there were two competing sessions. Given that the content of the competing session focused on ‘care’ many of the participants were forced to choose attending either session. As you are aware ‘care’ is the dominant discourse surrounding sociological understandings of disability and inadvertently, the voices of disabled people, who contest these discourses, were effectively negated. Thus, rather than creating a collaborative research environment where competing discourses can share a space to encourage ongoing dialogue, the program scheduling resulted in the marginalisation of one discourse and in turn, privileging another.

***CDS members request that conference programming consider the broader sociological implications of paper scheduling as a means to create dialogue between competing paradigms. This ensures that the voices of disabled researchers are not subjugated to dominant discourses.***

Given the list of concerns, we hope that as convenors of the CDS Thematic Group, we are able to work productively with the TASA Executive and TASA Conference Organising Committee to ensure that these critical issues are finally resolved.

Warm regards

Karen Soldatic & Helen Meekosha  
Co-Convenors  
Critical Disability Studies Thematic Group