

July 13, 2017

PROGRAMS TO HELP PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Regional Disability Advocacy Service (RDAS) has today announced new services to increase advocacy and information to people from diverse backgrounds living in North East Victoria and Southern NSW.

Executive Officer Martin Butcher said the funding would be a great boost.

“One of funding streams comes from the NSW and Victorian governments and is aimed at assisting marginalised people with disability, including those with an Aboriginal background, people who are born overseas and those living in rural and isolated locations, to access advocacy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS),” Mr Butcher said.

Mr Butcher said that with the funding, RDAS would be looking at doing an Aboriginal Engagement Project.

“This will be a 12-month project working with the local Aboriginal corporations and networks to develop different models of disability advocacy that are appropriate for Aboriginal people with disability and their families and delivered in community in which they live and with people they know and trust,” Mr Butcher said.

“Aboriginality makes up the largest diverse group in North East Victoria, representing about 3.5 per cent of the population. It is estimated that 48 per cent of Aboriginal people have a disability that impacts their daily living.”

Mr Butcher said the project will explore ways of providing advocacy services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to Aboriginal people with disability.

“An exciting part of this project is that RDAS will provide training to Aboriginal people to provide advocacy to themselves and other people in community,” Mr Butcher said.

“RDAS already has a Justice Support Service in place which uses trained volunteers to support people attending court. It is a great example of how advocacy services need to support Aboriginal people with disability attending court, especially as about 21 per cent of the people we have helped identified as Aboriginal people with disability.

“As Aboriginal people are over-represented in the justice system, there is a need to actively work with organisations such as the Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Albury-Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service to train volunteers.”

The second project will be to partner with the Ethnic Community Services Cooperative to deliver information sessions about the NDIS in remote locations and populations across Southern NSW including the Riverina, Murrumbidgee and Murray regions.

Mr Butcher said that this project would be important to people from diverse backgrounds including Aboriginals, people born overseas or people living in rural and isolated locations, who are less likely to be receiving support services.

“This project will actively seek out people with disability from diverse background and link them to the NDIS and to mainstream services,” he said.

ENDS

Media opportunity: Media wishing to know more are invited to talk with Mr Butcher at the RDAS Wagga office, 132 Fitzmaurice St, Wagga, at 11am on Thursday, July 13, 2017.