



Introducing...

**The Australian College of Community
& Disability Practitioners**

Making our voice heard



ACCDP



Making our voice heard

A new professional body has been established for community and disability practitioners. The new body is called The Australian College for Community and Disability Practitioners. This body is unique in that it is being established by workers themselves and will be governed by an independent Board comprising practitioners, employers and academics.



What is the Australian College of Community & Disability Practitioners?

The Australian College of Community and Disability Practitioners has been established in the first instance by the ASU to empower community and disability practitioners in the establishment of the standards required and expected of members in their work in the social, community and disability services sector. The College will initially operate under the auspices of the ASU with the intention that it will become an independent entity as soon as is feasible.

Decisions about the meaning, purpose, and requirements of community and disability practice are being made constantly. Currently, numerous stakeholders influence minimum standards for employment and for the

delivery of services in the community and disability sectors. Employers influence standards through position descriptions outlining their expectations of the skills and qualifications required to perform work in our industries. But these are ad hoc, inconsistent and vary greatly across the industry. Government influences standards through policy, legislative requirements, contracts and funding arrangements. Again, these are ad hoc and frequently not the result of best practice in service provision.

The voice that is most often missing in this environment is that of practitioners – the people at the frontline of service provision who understand best the needs and demands of the work, and the standards necessary to meet them.

It's time for those voices to be heard





Why do we need a college to set standards for our work?

The work of community and disability practitioners is becoming increasingly complex and devolved. There is a marked shift away from Government delivering essential community services and towards the non-Government sector being contracted to provide frontline services instead. The NDIS means that this shift is likely to become more marked over the next five years, not to mention the significant increases in people accessing community and disability services and staff required to meet that demand. Not only are the demands of the work increasing, but there are also increasing demands being placed on the profession. Members of the profession and practitioners have both a right and a responsibility to determine the standards that should be expected in the community and disability sectors to ensure quality of care and that the sector remains sustainable and safe.

The ASU Equal Pay Case proved that work in the community and disability sectors was undervalued. It is especially

important now, given that the sector is in period of significant change, that ways to describe and quantify the breadth and complexity of the work done by community and disability practitioners are developed by those people who understand the work best – practitioners themselves.

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This will mean that this work can be properly recognised and valued and that services can be protected. The ACCDP will provide a space for practitioners, with the support of academics and employers, to work together to articulate the nature of their work, anticipate the future needs of the sector and make sure that our voices are heard in the development of our industry.

Who will be on the board of the College?

The college will be governed by a Board comprising of:

- Employer representatives;
- Academics or members of the Skills Council;
- Practitioners representatives;
- A Chair appointed by the ASU

The College Board will meet regularly and will publish its proposed work-plan for each year. The work for the Board will be supported by the Executive Director of the College; acting in this role initially will be Dr. Katherine Barnsley, Director of Research and Professional Standards, ASU.

What will the College do?

The Board of the College will oversee the work of establishing standards of practice that would underpin the work in the Community and Disability sectors.

These standards will not just set out the “hard” skills and competencies required but most importantly, describe the “soft” skills of our profession, in the words of Anne Junor, the “social and organisational” skills that are more difficult to quantify, but that are critical to the performance of any work in the Community and Disability sectors.

In the first three years the ASU will ask the ACCDP to consult with practitioners working in all areas of the community service sector with a view to developing a code of conduct and a comprehensive framework to assist practitioners and employers describe the full extent of the work performed in the Community and Disability sectors. Then, the ACCDP will work to build a cohesive set of standards against which service delivery and staff skill sets can be quantified. The research into the nature of the work will be divided into the community and disability sectors as is appropriate.

The standards will be developed in consultation with working groups set up under the auspices of the college, ASU members and practitioners, and other professional bodies.

A Code of Conduct for Community and Disability Practitioners built by and for those working in the sector.

The first step in building a cohesive and coherent understanding of the sector and the standards required to perform our work will be the development of a draft Code of Conduct for practitioners in the community and disability sector. The College has been asked by the ASU to develop a draft Code of Conduct throughout 2014. After the draft has been developed the College will undertake an extensive consultation process with practitioners across the sector before the Code of Conduct is finalised by the Board. Once the Code is finalised, it will be promulgated across the sector and become the underpinning of the work of all members of the ACCDP.



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In the first three years the ASU will ask the ACCDP to consult with practitioners and employers to describe the full extent of the work performed in the community sector.
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What will the College do with the Standards once they are established?

Once the Board of the College has developed a Draft Set of Standards, the Board will submit the Standards to extensive consultation, both across the sector and with relevant stakeholders

Consultation will be with:

- Members of the College
- Other professional bodies
- Employers
- Academics
- Other relevant bodies including Government

Following the period of consultation, the ACCDP Board may then adopt the Standards as the established Standards of Practice for that section of the sector.

How do I become a member of the College?

Members of the ASU are automatically members of the College. Non-union members can join the college for a fee.

Members will be admitted to the College at one of three different levels:

- Member
- Fellow
- Companion

Initially all members will be admitted to the College with the interim level of Member. In the future when Standards have been established for a variety

of areas of practice across the sector, Members will be able to apply to be accredited against those Standards and will be admitted as Fellows of the College.

Fellows will be eligible to become Companions of the ACCDP in recognition of their significant and conspicuous contribution to the practice of community or disability work and to the ACCDP. Candidates for Companion will be by nomination from the membership of the ACCDP and will be subject to confirmation by the Board.

WILL MEMBERSHIP COST ME ANYTHING?

For the first three years, membership of the ACCDP will be included with ASU membership. No-one will be required to pay a fee they do not agree with.

How will the College be supported in its work?

In the first three years the College will be supported by the ASU. Primarily it will be supported by its Executive Director. In addition, the ACCDP will have a budget to establish an annual conference and for research to do its work.

Will I receive a membership card?

All members of the college will receive a membership card.



Members will also be able to nominate for the Board, vote in the election of Board members and serve on the committees & working groups of the ACCDP.

How do I have a voice in the work of the College?

As the College works to develop standards the Board will establish various working parties and sub-committees. Members of the college can nominate to work on these bodies. There will also be opportunities throughout the development and drafting stages for members to have their say.

What will being a member of the College mean for me?

Members of the College will be entitled to receive the magazine of the College. In addition they will be able to be members of subcommittees of the College and will automatically be part of the decision making and consultation processes involved in the development of the Code of Conduct and the draft Standards.

Members will also be able to nominate for the Board, vote in the election of Board members and serve on the committees and working groups of the ACCDP.

Members of the College will be entitled to use the post nominal designation MACCDP – Member of the Australian College of Community and Disability Practitioners.

Members of the College will be entitled to Members-only access to the AACDP website which will hold significant professional material and where members can be updated on College activities.

Ultimately, members will also be able to nominate for the ACCDP Board. ACCDP members will be kept informed about the election and nomination processed when they are finalised.

You can keep up to date on the latest news at www.ACCDP.org.au



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