



OAK RIDGE

COMMUNICATION GROUP

MEDIA RELEASE

April 5, 2006

ACTIV LAUNCHES EQUAL JUSTICE REPORT ON PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Activ has joined with government this week to launch groundbreaking research into the challenges faced by people with intellectual disability who come in contact with the justice system.

Launched as part of Activ Awareness Week, the non-for-profit organisation hopes the research will provide the basis for constructive dialogue and provide an opportunity to take positive and worthwhile steps towards service provision for this sector of the community both in government and non-government areas.

Dr Judith Cockram, from the Centre for Social Research, Edith Cowan University, found while people with intellectual disability are no more likely to be arrested than others in the population, at first arrest, they have a higher probability of being charged with more serious offences, receive disproportionately severe sentences, are four times more likely to be sent to prison and are significantly more likely to be rearrested than general population offenders.

She says people with intellectual disability have a 73% probability of being rearrested after the first offence compared to only 59% of general population offenders.

“One of the most important issues for people with an intellectual disability is the lack of services to stop them reoffending,” she says. “It’s not just a case of providing accommodation but other services, which just do not exist.”

According to Dr Cockram, the area of greatest policy attention needs to be directed to the development of effective treatment and rehabilitation programs for people with disability who have been convicted but are not eligible for certain government services.

Activ thanks Lotterywest, the Department of Corrective Services, Disability Services Commission, The Developmental Disability Council and People with Disabilities (WA) Inc. for their support and sponsorship of this courageous piece of research. Activ believes it will contribute to creating a better life for people with intellectual disability, their families and carers.

Page 1 of 2

“The co-operation from the departments for this research has been positive and I hope this report will encourage them to put some resources towards assisting this group who have been forgotten,” says Dr Cockram.

“The available research evidence indicates that well-designed and properly implemented programs can result in significant reductions in recidivism,” the report says.

She says: “People with more mild intellectual disability who are not eligible for services through Disability Services Commission are more likely to be caught up in the system because people with more severe disabilities are going to get more assistance.”

Dr Cockram says the ultimate challenge is creating a system that satisfies the public demand for accountability but at the same time recognizes that individual cognitive differences may limit an ability to obtain equal justice.

“This is not a particularly new problem,” explains Dr Cockram. “It is just that nothing seems to have been done. I have been working in this area for 15 years and if anything it has gotten worse. So, it is vital that this information is heeded and some measures taken.”

Jackie Tang, Deputy Commissioner Community and Juvenile Justice said: “The Department is pleased to be involved in this important research and working in collaboration with other agencies, we hope to continue to develop positive programs and outcomes for people with an intellectual disability who come into contact with the justices system.”

The launch is part of Activ Awareness Week (April 3 to 7) which focuses on the unique strengths, challenges and needs of people with intellectual disability and their families, living and working in WA, with a view to helping them pursue a better life.

**Launch details:
Thursday, April 6 at 10am at
The Niche Independent Living Centre,
Suite A, 11 Aberdare Road, Nedlands.**

For media information:

*Marina Valmadre
Oak Ridge Communication Group
marina@oakridgecg.com.au
9381 4200 or 0408 98 28 18*