



Jon Stanhope MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

Speaking notes for the
2007 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards

Sponsors Thank You Lunch
12.30pm, Friday 7th December 2007
The Lobby Restaurant

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this area.

Welcome to you all.

As a politician, one tends to spend a lot of time in the company of people who are trying to persuade one to do something, fund something, support something or legislate for something that will benefit the person doing the persuading.

It isn't too often that one finds oneself in the company, at one time, of so many individuals whose motivation is to improve the lot and the fortunes and the fulfilment of someone *else* – and to make our society a more accepting and wiser and more tolerant place in the process.

It is easy for us to be challenged by the notion of accommodating in our daily lives the needs and desires of someone with a disability. The very word – disability – starts with three such uncompromising letters - "dis".

About one in five Canberrans lives with a disability that affects his or her capacity to access the things in life that the other four of us take for granted.

And if the basic business of getting around town, or filling in a form, is a labour, compound that effort ten-fold for holding down a job, pursuing a rich social and sporting life, or fulfilling professional and personal ambitions.

And for many men and women with a disability, add one more challenge for good measure – the challenge of living as one chooses, of taking the risks and enduring the disappointments and experiencing the successes each of us deserves to live through.

As everyone here knows, The Inclusion Awards are about recognising the outstanding achievements of those businesses, organisations and individuals who actively seek to include people with a disability in their workplace, business or community.

I don't know what it was that motivated each of the supporters here today to become involved in the Inclusion Awards.

Perhaps it was making the discovery for themselves that there was so much to disability beyond the first three letters – in fact, that what lay beyond those three letters was “ability”.

I congratulate *Simply Wellness* and the other 2007 award winners for seeing beyond.

Inclusion isn't about do-gooding or patronisation or paternalism. Those are ways of behaving that keep the victims of our kindness at arm's length.

Inclusion is about reaching out, but then drawing in. It is about giving someone the space in which to be who they are, and then affirming whatever that may be.

Sometimes, there is a cost – at least initially. Workplaces may need to be retrofitted. Technologies may need to be deployed. A bit of creative thinking may be called for.

This is why the Inclusion Awards are so important. They show what can be done, often with modest effort, to ensure that every Canberran with a hitherto life-defining disability can leap over those obvious hurdles and get down to the really hard work of realising their dreams.

This lunch is an opportunity to thank the sponsors of the awards.

On behalf of the ACT Government I thank each of you for the part you have played in making the 2007 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards such a success.

Many of you have been supporters for a number of years. I hope that, like me, you take some personal pride in the recognition the Inclusion Awards now receive.

You believe in an inclusive society and *I* believe that in leading by example, you help others in the community share that belief.

I would like to thank our principal partners

- Koomarri, and
- MAXimusSolutions Australia

- our category sponsors

- Technical Aid to the Disabled ACT (TADACT)
- Drake Medox, and
- Spotless

- and our media partners

- The Canberra Times
- B2B in Canberra, and
- Capital Magazine

Our thanks also to the generous support in graphic design from:
Mirrabooka Marketing & Design

Please enjoy this informal lunch – a small token, but sincerely offered, of
the esteem in which you are held and the gratitude which is rightly yours.

Thank you.
ENDS