

LET'S TALK

The 'Let's Talk' group have been meeting regularly since late March, 1998 to discuss issues in common in relation to ADR practice. The idea for this group originated at one of ADRA's A Peak Body Project facilitation meetings. On 12 February, 1998 ADRA invited representatives from major ADR organisations in NSW and the ACT to discuss the option of a Peak Body. The meeting was held in the Mediation Room at the Land and Environment Court. Representatives from the following organisations attended and contributed to discussions - ACDC, ADRA, Centacare, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Macquarie University, Community Justice Centres, Conflict Resolution Network, Mediate Today, Interrelate, The Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators NSW, LEADR, Relationships Australia, The Accord Group, The Law Society of NSW, The Resolution Centre and Unifam.

During this meeting a lively discussion about the positives and negatives of a Peak Body took place. Several views were eloquently expressed and although there was not consensus about the need for a Peak Body, the desirability of an informal networking group was suggested and agreed upon by most, if not all, attendees. The 'Let's Talk' group exists to discuss issues in common between ADR organisations. There have now been six 'Let's Talk' meetings. Organisations have taken their turn to host the meetings and record the minutes. The first meeting was held at the offices of LEADR with subsequent meetings held at the Community Justice Centres Sydney office, Australian Commercial Disputes Centre, The Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators and Mediate Today.

The outcome of the early meetings was the identification of the desirability of a nationally accepted Code of Conduct for Mediators. The 'Let's Talk' group agreed to proceed with the development of a Code of Conduct which could be endorsed by ADR organisations, starting in NSW and extending nationally as we liaise with our peers.

Once the task was decided, the group then agreed to proceed by reviewing a range

of Ethical Codes of Conduct from various organisations. The Codes were compared against each other and the differences were noted. At the last meeting it was decided that a draft would be produced based on the common framework currently accepted by a number of organisations. This would then be expanded by incorporating new aspects identified in other codes which were seen to be useful elaborations and commendable inclusions. This draft will be the subject of discussion and input from members at the next 'Let's Talk' meeting. The aim is to then widely circulate a final working draft for comments and input to other organisations and interested individuals nationally, with a view to drafting a final document that may be used by Australian dispute resolution practitioners.

'Let's Talk' is the first non-commercial and non-proprietary network of its kind which provides regular opportunities to ADR providers and practitioners to discuss areas of common interest and concern and to develop initiatives which may benefit the fast growing ADR community as a whole.

Val Sinclair