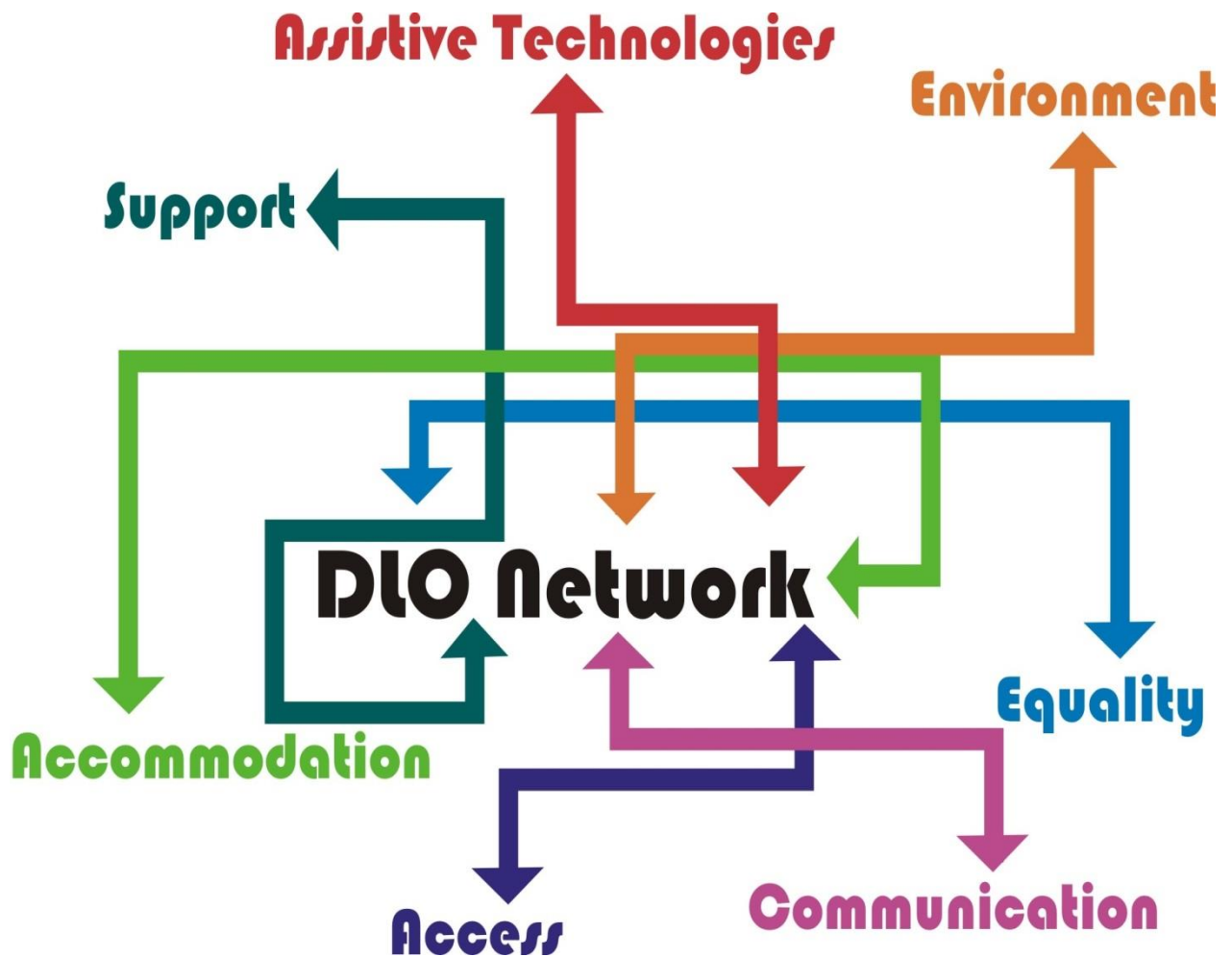


Disability Liaison Officers Network Annual Report 2014



Contents	Page
Disability Liaison Officer – Role and Responsibilities	3
Disability Liaison Officer Network Meetings 2014	4
Disability Liaison Officer Workplan 2014	5
Mentoring by Mary Malone	7
Participating in the WAM Scheme by Diarmaid Harnett	9
Voting and Visual Impairment by Gráinne Geraghty	10
NDA Report on voting trials for people with sight loss	10
Civil Service Trade Unions and Disability	12
Diversity & Equal Opportunities by Billy Hannigan	12
CPSU – Disability & Equal Opportunity by Cliodhna McNamara	13
NDA’s interactive eLearning training course on disability	15
International Day of Persons with Disabilities and World Mental Health Day	16
The DLO Network Moodle	17
Appendix 1 DLO Officers - Committee	18
Appendix 2 DLO Officers - Network Members	19

Disability Liaison Officer – Roles and Responsibilities

Section 47(1)(a) of the Disability Act 2005 requires public bodies to take all reasonable measures to promote and support the employment by it of persons with disabilities.

To fulfil this obligation a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) was appointed within each Government Department.

The Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) works in conjunction with Human Resources, Corporate Services, Information and Communications Technology Division and the Employee Assistance Service to assist and support staff with disabilities and their managers. To enable the provision of an effective and efficient service each DLO endeavours to undertake the following actions in their respective organisations:

- Act as a point of contact for staff with disabilities, their managers and Human Resource Section
- Provide advice, suggestions, guidance, necessary information and appropriate contacts
- Assist in the implementation of best HR practices in line with equality legislation including the collection, maintenance and reporting of data in compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act, 2005
- Facilitate increased awareness of disability throughout the organisation
- Advertise the DLO role to staff every six months
- Keep disability to the fore at meetings
- Ensure DLO contact details are available for staff induction
- Promote self-disclosure
- Attend DLO Network meetings and training sessions

Disability Liaison Officer Network Meetings 2014

The network met four times during 2014 including the AHEAD Learning Event in Farmleigh in December 2014. Some of the topics discussed were:

- Workplan for 2014
- Monitoring compliance under Part 5 of the Disability Act, 2005
- Assistive technology
- Job Shadow Initiative 2014
- Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) Programme
- Workplace Accommodations
- Promotion of the DLO Role and Services
- Marking World Mental Health Day 10 October 2014
- Marking International Day of Persons with a Disability 3 December 2014
- Engaging with Civil Service unions on how best to serve the needs of employees with disabilities

DLO Workplan 2014

Action	How	When
Advertise/Promote DLO and services available to people with a disability in the Department.	Intranet and/or email as appropriate	Throughout 2014
Provide reasonable accommodations to staff with a disability who request and fulfil the requirements.	Liaise with staff member, line-manager as appropriate, relevant professionals and provider of service/equipment.	Throughout 2014
Record accommodations provided	Add to the list available for the information of other DLOs	Throughout 2014
Compile and submit 3% return to DPER	Update records from previous years to include staff with a disability who have left and new staff with a disability or any staff who have acquired a disability including a record of any new Census forms received. Liaise with any Monitoring Committee.	March 2014
Participate in the DLO network	Attend meetings and share any experience/ information. Represent the DLO network at relevant events during the year	Throughout 2014
Administer and manage any WAM placements	Identify suitable placement Advertise via AHEAD Identify suitable candidate Apply for sanction for excluding order Mentoring Manage placement	January 2014 and for the duration of the placement

Promote and participate in the Job Shadow Initiative Day	Notify staff of the day, host participants	9 April 2014
Promote International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Update the staff about the supports available in the Department and in the wider community.	3 December 2014
Attend relevant NDA and other events regarding disability	Attend organised/advertised events on disability to increase awareness	Throughout 2014

* * *

Mark Lyons

Mark Lyons of the Central Statistics Office, Cork, served as Chairman of the DLO Network for five years from 2009 to 2014. Mark has vast experience and knowledge in all disability matters which he shared with the Network throughout his time in office. The DLO Network members wish to acknowledge with thanks Mark's generosity during his tenure. We wish him all the very best in the future.



Mark Lyons at the Ahead Learning Event in Farmleigh pictured with Marcella Luz and Eileen O'Connor

Mentoring



by Mary Malone

Central Statistics Office

New to the HR area and a complete stranger to the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme, I was excited and nervous at the prospects of becoming a WAM mentor.

Initially confusing my role as mentor with that of manager, I was focusing on the tasks our WAM placement person would be assigned instead of the support I could offer. This confusion was short lived, however, and a visit from a member of the AHEAD team opened my eyes to the reality of mentoring and the important role I could play in helping the placement person make the most of her time in the Central Statistics Office.

Meeting our WAM placement put any fears I had to rest. This person was thrilled to get the opportunity to work in the CSO and put her years in college to good use. Meeting her briefly the first day, I stepped back a little and allowed her time with her manager and colleagues as they introduced her to the work and gave her a general overview of the workings of the HR area and the specific programme she would be working on. I did have a quick chat with her before she left for home, ensuring she had been shown how to get in and out of the building and where the main facilities were. In that chat we arranged to have a proper meeting at the end of her first week so we'd have something more constructive to discuss.

And so it began from that very first Friday. Our first meeting was positive in every respect. I introduced myself properly, gave her the background to my years in the public service and a little about my personal life too. In turn she told me about her years in college, her specialised area of study and the types of work she was particularly interested in. She also gave me some detail on the exciting places she

had travelled to and the experiences she had gained in the part time jobs she had held throughout.

We completed the Mentoring Internship & Mentoring Agreement form.

This meeting proved very fruitful to the relationship we built over the coming months. Our relationship was honest and open from the outset. We discussed her particular disability and what accommodations (if any) she would require to ensure she had the best possible opportunity in every aspect of her role and her time in the CSO. We discussed the technology she would be using, any difficulties this would pose and whether she needed me to intervene on her behalf.

I applied a positive and enthusiastic approach to my role as mentor. I encouraged my mentee to take full responsibility and ownership of her 6-month placement. I encouraged her to make it as much about future roles she would be applying for as well the role she held here.

Our subsequent meetings followed on from this. We matched the tasks she was managing in the CSO with the competencies required for future job applications. We kept an eye on www.publicjobs.ie and I supported her with her job applications. I continually reminded her of how well qualified she was and encouraged her to look upwards and beyond in her hopes and dreams for her future. I introduced her to managers across the organisation and sought opportunity for her to gain exposure in areas outside of her own immediate work area.

I sought invitations for our WAM placement to sit in on focus groups and appropriate meetings to give her an insight into project management.

I worked with her manager to arrange additional training and development. During her time in the CSO, she has upskilled in several areas, e.g. Presentation Skills, Staff Management, Specific IT programmes and an online recruitment campaign.

In many other areas, our WAM placement's Data Analytic expertise benefited those working around her, including myself and without doubt, numerous work processes have been improved because of her modern insight.

There are only a few weeks of the 6-month WAM period remaining. Over the past few months, I have gained huge admiration for the work being done by AHEAD and the opportunities afforded to talented graduates in the WAM programme. Everybody deserves an equal chance in life and WAM is a fantastic gateway to educate organisations and individuals in how they can make a difference.

Participating in the WAM Scheme by Diarmaid Harnett



As a law graduate, I thought entering into the working environment would be stressful and overall daunting, particularly with a learning disability. However, the guidance and reassurance that Mr Paul Kenny, Pensions Ombudsman and his fellow colleagues gave within the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman allowed me to develop my academic skills and transform them into practice in a very friendly and understanding environment. Working directly with Mr Kenny was invaluable experience as I gained many skills from organising court documents to drafting letters relating to pension complaints.

The opportunity to assist the investigators with legal research was great practical experience. Each investigator took their time explaining the situation and were very approachable with any queries I had. Having reviewed the relevant pension schemes and contracts, I would submit reports to the Senior Investigator for approval prior to it becoming a final determination. The overall impression was that there was an open door policy within the organisation. Throughout my placement I became more confident with my written material (something that I always had concerns regarding) and gained greater understanding of legal procedures from responding to solicitors' letters, attending internal meetings and observing in the commercial court.

As my time came to an end, I began looking for other opportunities within the legal industry. I was very fortunate with the experience gained within the office and that really came across in my interviews as I was offered two different positions: something that I believe would not have occurred if I was not given the opportunity to take part in this programme. My current position as a paralegal within the Commission for Communications Regulation allows me to further develop my skills gained within the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman.

Voting and Visual Impairment

by Gráinne Geraghty

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

In early June of 2014 the National Disability Authority (NDA) organised mock elections at their headquarters on Clyde Road in Dublin. Blind and visually impaired people were invited to participate in the trial and give feedback on their experience.

The aim of the trial was to give blind and visually impaired people an opportunity to experience different methods of casting votes with a view to developing a model that would allow for independent voting in the future.

On the day we trialed 3 different methods of casting our votes:

1. Telephone voting: this allowed the voter to dial a number which would connect them to an operator who would read out the list of candidates. The voter could then verbally give their list of voting options to the operator. I found this method very simple and not confusing.
2. Braille voting: this involved a braille list of candidates with a number in a box beside each name. It was very good to be able to read over the list of candidates in a braille format. The instructions were a bit confusing and I wasn't clear about what I was supposed to do.
3. Internet voting: the voter logged onto a secure website where they could read a list of candidates and make their selection. I did this on a mobile phone and could navigate round the different pages. I think it would be easier using a PC or laptop.

It was interesting to try out the various possible ways in which a blind or partially sighted person could independently participate in the voting process.

NDA Report on voting trials for people with sight loss

The NDA have kindly given us permission to reprint the Executive Summary of their report.

In June 2014 the National Disability Authority carried out trials of three ways for people with sight loss to vote independently. At present, people with sight loss usually get help from a family member, friend or polling staff.

The three voting methods tested were:

- Voting by phone – casting vote by giving verbal instructions to a telephone operator

- Voting using a 'ballot template' – a 'stick-on' device with Braille, raised lettering and cut out sections to find where to mark the vote
- Voting by computer – using a computer, or tablet or smart-phone to cast the vote using an application designed for that purpose

The overall results of the trials indicate that there is no single solution that is likely to work for most voters with sight loss. Ballot templates were usable for most voters for a referendum ballot paper and a short election ballot paper. As the election ballot paper and number of choices grew in size, the template was less usable and reliable.

Voting by computer worked for some voters, probably those who are comfortable and experienced in using screen reading tools. Some people with sight loss, especially older people, would be unlikely to be comfortable with such technologies. It may also face credibility and political issues, given the history of electronic voting in Ireland.

Telephone voting was usable for most voters, but presents many challenges in allowing the voter to be certain that their vote has been cast in line with their intentions.

Distribution of ballot templates is likely to be a straightforward and relatively low-cost option. Provision of an option for computerised or telephone voting raises issues around the security and integrity of the ballot, as well as potentially significant logistical and cost challenges. There are 7,500 or so polling places, which range from large suburban schools to small community buildings serving isolated communities. The feasibility of equipping these with technology to print-off an electronically-generated or phone-generated ballot would be significant. 'Electronic vote casting' uses computers or telephones to generate a printed ballot paper, which goes into the same ballot box and count process as all other papers. The National Disability Authority recommends that the security and integrity, logistics and feasibility of 'electronic vote casting' is explored further by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, and be discussed further in partnership with the National Disability Authority and relevant disability organisations.

The National Disability Authority also recommends that the option of a ballot template be offered for a future referendum ballot, and the outcome and acceptability evaluated.

Civil Service Trade Unions and Disability

At our September 2014 network meeting we were addressed by Billy Hannigan of the Public Services Executive Union and Denis Keane of the Civil Public & Services Union. Billy outlined his role in the Diversity and Equality Standing Committee of General Council, which comprises Civil Service Unions and the Diversity and Equality Unit at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and Denis reflected on how best unions and the Network could work together in the areas of disability and accessibility. Following the meeting the Network asked representatives from both unions to outline their policy on disability for our annual report.

Diversity & Equal Opportunities a Big Part of our Agenda

by Billy Hannigan

Deputy General Secretary

Public Service Executive Union



The PSEU has always had a big role to play in the development of an equal opportunity agenda and this continues to be the case.

In the case of staff with disabilities the Union played a major part in the development of a Code of Practice on Disability in the Civil Service and we are very supportive of the efforts of the Disability Liaison Officers' Network.

Disability issues feature in our discussions with employers and we play an active part in the General Council sub-committee on disability issues – a forum where representatives of Civil Service Unions and management meet to discuss relevant matters.

We are also active in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Committee on Disability issues.

Where members have issues in the workplace they can be assured of representation from PSEU and we work with employers to ensure people's needs are accommodated in the work place. We particularly welcomed recent guidance and information issued to Civil Servants on Mental Health and well-being in the workplace.

Of course, there are improvements needed, both in individual employments and at national level, to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in the workplace. PSEU members know that we will be involved in trying to secure those necessary changes.

CPSU – Disability & Equal Opportunity

by Clíodhna McNamara

Assistant General Secretary

Civil Public & Services Union



As readers will be aware we represent approximately 13,000 Clerical and Staff Officers in Government Departments and analogous grades in semi-state companies such as An Post. The union has had an active involvement for many years in seeking improvements for people with disabilities in all aspects of their lives but particularly in matters affecting their employment.

Our historical achievements in the Disability arena include the Grade Restructuring Agreement for Visually Impaired Telephonists and in partnership with the Department of Finance at the time and other Civil Service Unions the sponsorship of the Goodbody Report on the Employment and Career Progression of People with Disability in the Irish Civil Service. We also actively input into the provisions of the 2005 Disability Act and the National Disability Strategy along with our colleagues in other unions.

We participate and are active on the General Council Disability Sub-Committee and the Disability Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions as well as having our own active National Disability Committee. We fully support the work of the Disability Liaison Network and will continue to do so.

We are very conscious of the fact that our challenge going forward is to continue to highlight and campaign on issues that affect our members with disabilities in the workplace as there is a real concern and fear in workplaces that workers with disabilities were a forgotten human resource in a time when the focus of government was on austerity.

Another challenge is to ensure the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was adopted in late 2006 and still Ireland has not ratified the convention. The Convention aims to promote, protect and strengthen the human rights of all persons with disabilities and importantly enshrines the right of persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the workplace.

NDA's interactive eLearning training course on disability

by Eileen O'Connor

Disability Liaison Officer,

Department of Transport Tourism and Sport



One of the responsibilities placed on the Public sector under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 is to facilitate increased awareness of disability throughout the workplace.

To this end, the National Disability Authority (NDA) commissioned a new eLearning module on Disability Equality Training for public sector staff. The course is designed to be useful to a wide range of staff in the public sector in Ireland. Those who provide services directly to customers will become more confident when dealing with customers with disabilities. Those who develop policies or procedures will learn how to make sure that people with disabilities can use the relevant services. The course is provided free of charge by the NDA.



The course can be taken locally at one's own PC. It takes approximately 1 hour to complete, and can be taken in one or in several sessions to suit. Headphones are required for sound, though subtitles are provided.

Our Department agreed to take part in a pilot of the course. This involved some interaction between the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO), IT personnel and the NDA. After a couple of conference calls, we were set up with user accounts, and ready to go. We bought headsets for all, on the grounds that elearning will be used to deliver more training in the future and would therefore be a good investment. The headsets cost approx. €6 per set.

We "piloted the pilot" within HR and IT Divisions to anticipate and fix any gremlins. There were a few suggestions from this group which we fed back to NDA.

The Department IT helpdesk agreed to field queries that might arise from staff.

In September, 2011 the Secretary General sent an email to all introducing the course and encouraging participation. The DLO emailed all later that day with the link to the course. Within a week of the rollout, 168 staff had taken the course. Feedback was very positive. People felt that the course would indeed assist them when dealing with people with disabilities.

Further information on the course is available by contacting the National Disability Authority eLearning team at admin@training.nda.ie or 01-6080400.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a United Nations sanctioned day to celebrate the achievements, contribution and experiences of people with disability. It is a worldwide celebration that occurs on 3 December each year. The purpose of the day is to promote an understanding of disability issues and to mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. Disability Liaison Officers mark this day every year by making information available to colleagues on disability and on the role of the DLO.

World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilising efforts in support of mental health. It is supported by the World Health Organisation and many organisations in Ireland. Many DLOs marked the day by making available information on mental health, giving links to the Mental Health Ireland website at <http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/> and to the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service presentation on Positive Mental Health at <http://cseas.per.gov.ie/files/2014/10/03-10-2014-PDF-version-Positive-Mental-Health-handouts-on-website.pdf>.

The DLO Network Moodle

One very useful communication tool which the DLO Network uses is our Moodle. Moodle (acronym for modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment) is a web-based platform for different kinds of information sharing. Most colleges and universities use Moodle to post course notes, assignments, discussion forums and exam results.

We in the DLO Network use Moodle to post agendas and minutes for meetings, news of upcoming events and publications, copies of presentations, discussion forums and information on various forms of assistive technology. When someone posts something on the Moodle people in the Network receive an email with the information. Our Moodle is an invaluable depository of information built up over the years and a continuing resource which we can draw on.



Appendix 1

Disability Liaison Officer Network Committee 2014

Chairperson

Mark Lyons, Central Statistics Office (up to June 2014)

Marcella Luz, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Eileen O'Connor,

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (June 2014 to December 2014)

Secretary and Editor of the DLO Network Annual Report 2014

Paul Daly, Legal Aid Board

Treasurer

Christine Reid, Property Registration Authority

Appendix 2

Disability Liaison Officer Network Members 2014

Name	Department / Office
Adrienne McGill	An Garda Síochána, Civilian Directorate
Miriam Kelly-Minogue	Áras an Úachtaráin
Mark Lyons	Central Statistics Office
Lauri Walsh	The Courts Service
Carmel Keane	Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Nuala Casey	Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Marcella Luz	Dept of Children & Youth Affairs
Helen Condon	Dept of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources
Jackie Windsor	Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Karen Brophy	Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
John Thornton	Dept of Defence
Leona De Khors	Dept of Education & Skills
Ann Slevin	Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
Ann Timlin	Dept of the Environment, Community & Local Government

Karen Higgins	Dept of the Environment, Community & Local Govt
Marianne Walsh	Dept of Finance
Derek Barry	Dept of Finance
Mary McSharry	Dept of Finance
Brendan Watters	Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Miriam Dixon	Dept of Health
Barbara Donnan	Dept of Justice & Equality
Adrian Breen	Dept of Public Expenditure and Reform
Noeline Higgins	Dept of Social Protection
Jackie Coogan	Dept of An Taoiseach
Eileen O'Connor	Dept of Transport, Tourism & Sport
Suzanne Mills	Houses of the Oireachtas
Paul Daly	Legal Aid Board
Áine Armstrong	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Siobhán Kearney	National Council for Special Education
Michael De Lappe	National Council for Special Education
Vincent Breen	Office of Public Works
Collette Maguire	Office of the Attorney General
Wesley Graham	Office of the Chief State Solicitor

Gearoid Browne	Office of the Chief State Solicitor
John Maher	Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General
Yvonne Corrigan	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
Janet Buckley	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
Raymond Butler	Office of the Ombudsman
Isobel McDonnell	Office of the Revenue Commissioners
Frank Honan	Ombudsman for Children's Office
Pauline Stafford	Ordnance Survey Ireland
Linda Wade	Probation Service
Christine Reid	Property Registration Authority
Sinead Devlin	Public Appointments Service
Deirdre Dalton	State Examinations Commission
Paula Shearan	State Laboratory
Pat Fannin	State Laboratory
Geoff Farrell	Valuation Office