



SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY

ANNUAL REPORT
2012-13

Statement of Purpose

Side By Side Advocacy promotes and upholds the rights, needs and interests of people with intellectual disability to enable full and meaningful participation in the community.

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

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CONTENTS

ABOUT US.....	P3
VALUES.....	P4
OUR ADVOCACY DEFINED.....	P5
VISION STATEMENT	P5
CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT.....	P6
COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT.....	P8
EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT.....	P10
STAFF.....	P11
FINANCIAL REPORTS.....	P12
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	P21

ABOUT US

Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated is a community-based not-for-profit organisation with the status of a charity. It provides advocacy and support to people with disability, primarily intellectual disability. An advocate gives a voice to a person to enable that person's needs to be met. Issues requiring advocacy include housing and accommodation, payment of bills, education and medical procedures.

Side By Side Advocacy originated as Citizen Advocacy Ryde-Hunters Hill (CARHH). A steering committee was established in 1989 and the association was incorporated in 1999. One of the driving forces of the steering was John Roarty, a resident of Weemala. He wrote forcefully about his experience of being institutionalised in his book *Captives of Care*. The citizen advocacy movement originated in the USA in the 1970s and follows the principles of social role valorisation (SRV) enunciated by Wolf Wolfensberger. SRV explicitly brings people with disability into the general community by recognising their role as valued members of society instead of categorising them because of their disability. Citizen advocacy finds the most vulnerable members of a community and matches each person with a caring person from that community who can freely provide advocacy and encouragement in an unpaid capacity. Such relationships can extend for many years and are very frequently expressive, that is, provide emotional inclusion and support and do not merely exist just to undertake the advocacy role. Side By Side Advocacy's support role in citizen advocacy is through the professional experience and training of our staff that advise and assist the citizen advocate directly. In addition we can call on our advocate associates with particular expertise (e.g. law, pharmacy, housing, nutrition) who donate their time and knowledge to inform the advocacy. Citizen advocacy is an ongoing relationship between two parties- members of the general community- and it is not appropriate for us to intervene in those relationships except to support the relationship.

Our individual advocacy program involves professional dedicated staff responding directly to a person with disability requiring assistance. There is no cost to the client. A person may ask us for individual advocacy assistance whenever it is required. This form of advocacy is more easily quantified for accounting purposes, although a numerical value does not necessarily reflect the time spent in and complexity of individual advocacy acts.

We changed our name to Side By Side Advocacy in 2006. The name reflects the structure of organisation as we have two separate advocacy models running alongside each other. It also reflects our advocacy style. The Citizen Advocacy Program is offered in the Ryde and Hunter's Hill local government areas. Our Individual Advocacy Program is available to people with intellectual disability who reside in the local government areas of Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Pittwater, Ryde, Warringah and Willoughby.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

- Each person's life is of equal and inherent value and worth.
- People with disability have the right to advocacy and to protection from devaluation, neglect, abuse and the denial of human rights.
- People with disability have the right to be treated as individuals, and not in terms of their disability.
- All people are entitled to comprehensive and appropriate support to ensure full inclusion into the community.
- All people have the right to make decisions about their own lives.
- All people should be treated with dignity and respect.
- All people have the right to be safe, valued and accepted.
- All people have the potential to grow and develop and should be provided with opportunities.
- All people regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality or religion have the same human and

OUR ADVOCACY DEFINED

WHAT IS CITIZEN ADVOCACY?

We seek to meet the fundamental needs of people with intellectual disability by establishing and supporting freely given relationships of advocacy.

Citizen Advocacy is an international movement that seeks to promote, protect and defend the rights, interests and dignity of people who are vulnerable. It involves the unique and powerful response of ordinary citizens, who are unpaid and independent of the human service system. They choose to enter into relationship with a person with disability for the sole purpose of meeting one or some of that person's needs. The citizen advocacy relationship is governed by clearly defined principles. These include fidelity, persistence, and freedom from conflict of interest, loyalty, person-centred planning and inclusion.

Although contemporary society continues to look to professionals for answers, citizen advocacy offers opportunities for neighbours to help neighbours. Ordinary citizens possess a variety of talents through their experiences in family, work, church and community associations. The program also enlists the support of skilled and resourced advocate associates who provide information and support to advocacy relationships and program staff.

WHAT IS INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY?

The rights, needs and interests of a person with disability have primacy in our Individual Advocacy Program. Our advocates meet with and respond directly to the person to gain the clearest understanding of their advocacy needs. Our advocacy actions assist not replace the 'voice' of that person.

Individual advocacy is provided by our professional advocates who respond to a range of issues from one to one support of clients (people with intellectual disability). Individual Advocacy focuses on the interests, rights and needs of an individual and attempts to overcome barriers or injustices faced by the person with disability in their everyday life.

. Priority is given to the most vulnerable people who are disconnected from family or any meaningful and significant relationship and who are at risk of harm

Individual Advocacy provides support in meetings with service providers through to assisting in the lodging of formal complaints, review of guardianship orders and appeals concerning administrative decisions of government funded services.

If we are not able to provide support to a person with disability due to geographical constraints or resource issues we will provide the contact details for the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service in order that they are referred to an appropriate advocacy provider. If the concern is about a persistent systemic problem, we will ensure that specific peak body and/or specialist advocacy organisations are made aware of the issue.

Vision Statement

We envisage a world where people with disability are equal and valued; where diversity is celebrated, needs are fulfilled and opportunities realised.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Side By Side Advocacy has again completed a successful year in which we worked tirelessly to promote and uphold the rights, needs and interests of people with disability. We did this through providing advocacy. Our two advocacy programs are by design separate from each other and through circumstance this year have experienced vastly different conditions. Our Individual Advocacy Program has been consistent and in the main predictable. People with disability continue to experience barriers (discrimination, neglect and abuse to name but a few) and our program continues to find ways to go around or through these barriers. Our individual advocates Kirsty MacDonald and Maree Salzano have again performed their roles to a very high standard. They are a dynamic team who demonstrate dedication, passion and a relentless quest for social justice for their clients. On behalf of the board I would like to thank and congratulate Kirsty and Maree for their contribution to the organisation, and to the positive difference they have made in the lives of people with disability. Kirsty surprised and saddened us with her resignation in May. Kirsty had been employed by Side By Side Advocacy since 2008. She came to us as a new graduate and over five years became a highly accomplished advocate. Kirsty is now working with another advocacy organisation, and while we miss her, we are pleased that her skill and expertise as an advocate has not been lost to the disability sector. Recruitment for a new individual advocate is currently underway. We hope that this will be a smooth and swift process.

Recruitment for the Citizen Advocacy Coordinator has been far from smooth. Gary Goodship, our Executive Officer has CA training and has been "caretaker" of the program in the absence of a Coordinator. However, this is not the same as having a dedicated person in the role and we have been frustrated and disappointed in the difficulty of finding a suitable person for the position. After numerous rounds of advertising, many interviews and one false start, we are delighted to announce that we have appointed Deb Maio to the position. Deb comes to us with professional and life experience relevant to Citizen Advocacy and early signs are that she is a perfect fit for the role. Deb has hit the ground running and is working to complete a Relationship Review. This will give us an accurate account of the status of the program and will inform our actions for the coming year. We are well aware that such a long time without a Coordinator may have resulted in significant consequences. The organisation remains committed to the model of Citizen Advocacy and the board will continue to work to ensure the success of the program.

The other challenge for our organisation is one that is not new. It is the challenge of participation. We have very few members and there are current vacancies on our board. We have tried to address this by being as visible as we can be in the community. We held stalls at the Granny Smith Festival in October and at the Ryde City Council Community Expo in May and have made numerous presentations to meetings of service clubs in the area. All of these have been well received and have proved to be an effective way to disseminate information to people who may need advocacy now or in the future. However these ventures have not been successful in recruiting a broader membership base, which is essential for the viability of the organisation. We have re-launched our newsletter this year and the website is now up and running after a lengthy redevelopment process. Perhaps these avenues may enable us to engage with a wider audience and potential members. Our annual cocktail party to celebrate International Day of People with Disability was again well attended, and may be a source of potential members, advocates and board members of the future.

When I wrote this report last year, we were just starting the process of Quality Assurance. We, like all other advocacy programs funded by the NDAP (National Disability Advocacy Program) are required to go through an extensive auditing and certification process to ensure that we are operating according to the Disability Service Standards, legislated by the Australian Parliament. In addition, in order to be certified we have to show that we have systems in place to continuously improve the quality of our organisation and the advocacy that we provide. The deadline to comply is November 2013... so the race is on! In September we undertook a Gap Analysis with BSI, an independent certification body. This process identified our areas of strength and weakness according to the certification criteria. It gave a clear picture of the areas in which we were doing well and identified where we needed to improve, change or create policies, processes and procedures. The report clearly mapped out the road we had to travel in order to be registered; a new constitution, revision and reformatting of policies and procedures, rewriting of the board manual, introduction of feedback/ satisfaction rating mechanisms, risk analysis, strategic planning..... These are just a few of the tasks that we undertook. The pace has been consistent and relentless and we started the process of Quality Assurance as somewhat reluctant (and sometimes grumbling!) participants. But somehow, somewhere along the way we experienced a change. The process of Quality Assurance forced us to look critically and analytically at the organisation. We were forced to declutter, spring clean and reorder and through this process the requirement for continuous improvement has become a commitment. In June we successfully undertook Stage 1 of the certification process. The final stage will be undertaken in September and we are confident of gaining certification. We look forward to continuing to provide high quality advocacy with a board, staff and organisation that is indeed dedicated to continuous improvement.

I would like to congratulate our Executive Officer, Gary Goodship, for the way that he has led the organisation through a busy and challenging year. While dealing with significant health issues, Gary has been able to juggle demands of the day to day operations of the office, the huge challenge of the Quality Assurance, and the advocacy needs of our clients and program participants. Gary's dedication to the organisation and to the rights of people with disability is unwavering – and he still says he has the best job in the world. Finally I would like to thank my fellow board members. This has been a very demanding year for the board. The volume of reading, revision and writing has been astounding and it is a credit to the board and their commitment that we have achieved so much this year.

Coralie Jensen
Chair

A voluntary Committee of Management (the Board) oversees the legal and financial operation of the program. Management Committee members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting and contribute at every level to ensure the ongoing success of the program.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

CHAIRPERSON— CORALIE JENSEN

Coralie has a background in education and a passion for inclusion and social justice for people with disability. She has been a member of Side By Side Advocacy for many years. After eleven years as a volunteer to the organisation, Coralie joined the Committee of Management seven years ago. She is the Chairperson for a fifth year. Coralie has been deeply involved in the preparation of our fundraising events, development of policy, strategic planning, and in promoting and lobbying for the organisation and disability issues in general.

VICE CHAIRPERSON – MING CHAK LEE

Ming is a long time resident of the Ryde area. After completing his studies he approached Ryde Council to enquire about volunteering in his community. Ming was put in touch with Side By Side Advocacy and spent some time learning about the organisation. After seeing the enormous impact the organisation has on improving the lives of people with disability Ming agreed to join the Board in July 2010. In November 2010 he was elected to the position of Vice Chair. Ming is a practicing doctor and has an interest in promoting the welfare of people with disability in the community.

TREASURER – MICHAEL SLINN

Michael is a professional accountant. Without Michael and his commitment we would be poorer in many senses. Michael gives many hours to this organisation and is also active with other organisations helping towards a better life for disadvantaged people. Michael and his wife live at Bulla Burra in the Blue Mountains and have two children, two grandchildren, and two foster grandchildren.

MEMBER - STEPHEN MACDONALD

Steve is originally from the UK has lived and worked in Australia since 2004. He has 14 years' experience in various IT roles, including technical support, training and project management, and now provides IT services for Sydney's non-profit organisations. Steve began volunteering with Side By Side in February 2008, and became a board member in March 2012.

MEMBER — MICHELLE DONELLY

Michelle is one of the founding members of Citizen Advocacy Ryde-Hunters Hill and has been actively involved in the organisation for over twenty years. Michelle ensures that people with disability are included as valuable members of society. Michelle has an academic professional as well as a personal commitment to educating people about disability. Michelle has provided extensive SRV oriented training and assistance to staff.

MEMBER – JAN GORMAN

This is Jan's third year on the Board of Management. She is the mother of four delightful adults: one daughter and three sons who have blessed her with four grandchildren. The family has lived in Eastwood for 30 years. Jan has worked in schools for 35 years and has been involved with dyslexia correction for more than 10 years.

LIFE MEMBER – GEORGE GRAY

George is our only life member having served the Board of Management for ten consecutive terms. He is a fine speechmaker and a consummate networker and has wide social contacts over the northern Sydney area. George also provides assistance in recruitment of staff as required. George lives in the Ryde area.

ASSISTANT TO MEMBER – MARIELLA PAVONE

Mariella has been a Ryde resident for 14 years; she is interested in giving back to her community. She enjoys contributing to the organisation by providing support to one of our board members. Mariella is currently employed in the customer service field and has had considerable experience with people with disability. Mariella left us in August

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

For Side By Side Advocacy it has been obviously a year of change built on renewal and reform, we are certainly fortunate to “fall on our feet” each time we have an addition to staff or committee. Even tho a loss of staff at the time seems to be a disaster we, in fact, improve our knowledge and skill base. Having Deb join us as Citizen Advocacy Coordinator shortly after Kirsty, our long time Individual Advocate, left us was hopefully a portent of things to come. It was sad to see Kirsty go but it was quite pleasing that she moved to a like advocacy agency closer to her home. Maree, our Part-time Advocate, continues to provide excellent advocacy support to people with disability across the ten (10) LGAs in which we are contracted. As always the spirit of Side By Side shows through when adversity of any kind rears it's head, when I had to go into hospital earlier in the year the staff and board certainly pulled together to cover my absence, with special thanks to Coralie for not only filling the role but taking the lead for the QA gap analysis at that time.

Our 3rd party Quality Assurance certification journey has highlighted our strengths and weaknesses but thankfully the former outweighed the latter tenfold. Our Stage one audit was impressive for the audit team as ever thing was placed at their fingertips, thanks Coralie. After stage two (2) of the process is undertaken we will have our certification and can continue to do what we do best, provide advocacy, we then undergo a surveillance audit on the anniversary of our 2nd stage annually. For the casual observer and even our clients/program participants looking in at Side By Side, nothing has changed, a bit like the duck looking serene on the surface by paddling furiously underwater, but we now has an extensive library of practice based documents comprising our Quality Management System, this underpins our Quality Assured mode of operation in all things we do.

We continue to interact with other Advocacy Organisations through our representation in NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN) at a state level and with Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) nationwide this give us a stronger voice in matters that affect those that we support. We are the Citizen Advocacy representative on the NSW Disability Network forum, a group auspiced by NSW Council of Social Services, which by its very nature gives us the ability to be involved in submissions to various inquiries etc. and this group is often used as a policy sounding board by both state and federal government disability agencies. These external interactions and influences are growing more important with all of the changes to the “Disability Environment” such as National Disability Insurance Scheme (Was DisabilityCare for a while) Self-Managed Funding, Active Support, Person Centred Planning. Disability Strategies, Access Strategies and many other “good” ideas (well they were good ideas at the time) that the people provided with disability advocacy are forced to negotiate. It is paramount that we are at least a small part of the voice helping to mould and make these systems easier to navigate in the future.

Hopefully in the coming year we can further build on our strengths and can continue to improve our profile in the community both in the field in which we work and in the broader community, we can do this by continuing to add people of quality to our board and staff when we have the opportunity.

Gary Goodship
Executive Officer

STAFF

EXECUTIVE OFFICER – GARY GOODSHIP

Gary Joined Side By Side Advocacy in November of 2008 after a number of years working in senior roles within service provision for people with a disability, in various regions of Sydney. He has also taken on the role of a Citizen Advocate through an allied organisation in Sydney's western suburbs. Gary has a keen interest in social justice for people living with intellectual disability and certainly enjoys the variety of roles that he is able to enact on a daily basis within Side By Side Advocacy.

ADVOCATE – MAREE SALZANO

Maree has been a Citizen Advocate for many years and has other personal experience of being an advocate as well as having been member of the Board of Management of a like advocacy organisation. In 2007 Maree established our individual advocacy program on the Northern Beaches and shares her time between an office in Dee Why and our West Ryde office. Maree has a deep commitment to social justice.

ADVOCATE – KIRSTY MACDONALD

Kirsty is a trained legal practitioner. She has a keen interest in the rights of people with disability heightened through her prior volunteer work with the Welfare Rights Centre and the Intellectual Disability Rights Service - Criminal Justice Support Program. Kirsty has been working fulltime as an individual advocate for us since May 2008, covering many areas in the Northern Sydney region which of course includes our historic Ryde Hunter's Hill LGAs. Kirsty left us in May to further her career in advocacy.

COORDINATOR CITIZEN ADVOCACY – DEB MAIO

Deb joined us in May 2013; her background in disability is as a parent, guardian and working in Individual Advocacy and in Citizen Advocacy. Deb spent many years in the education sector working to provide equal access to mainstream education for students with disability. Deb values the opportunity to support advocates to speak up for people with disability and their right to a full and inclusive life in their community.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

2012-2013

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