



side by side

The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy

Summer 2021

www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Summer Update

Welcome to the summer edition of Side By Side. The team has returned from a short break with energy and enthusiasm for the year ahead.

We are committed to providing advocacy in Covid safe ways as we continue to monitor health advice. If you are confused about the changing information about Covid-19, read on for some details about a helpline that could be useful.

Advocates at Side By Side Advocacy know that some people are cautious about leaving home or unable to leave home in these unusual times but we can still provide advocacy. Just talk to us about the support you need.

Keep in mind that we have been adapting our approach to meet individual advocacy needs long before Covi-19. Let us know if you would prefer to talk on the phone, via video, by email, face to face or in some other way. We can also organise for an interpreter to be present if that would assist you.

The year has just begun but we are off to a flying start with new team members joining us and lots more happening, so read on to:

- meet new staff members, Katrina and Will
- receive a Citizen Advocacy update
- hear how you can support the important work of Side By Side Advocacy
- obtain details about a disability support line
- learn some communication tips
- find out about how you and/or the organisation you are part of can invite us to speak with you about the Disability Royal Commission
- mark some dates in your calendar
- find our contact details so you can ask questions or give us feedback about our work.

I look forward to catching up with you again soon.

Kim Roots

Executive Officer - Side By Side Advocacy

Welcome to new Co-researchers – Katrina and Will

The Inclusive Governance Project is researching how community organisations can best include people with intellectual disability as Board and Committee members. This will enable people with intellectual disability to have a real voice and involvement in the decision-making of community organisations. Two Co-researchers have recently joined Research Project Officer, Bernadette Curryer, bringing with them a lived experience of disability, enthusiasm for a full and varied life and a passion to take up opportunities to develop and grow. We welcome Katrina Sneath and Will Harding to our team. If anyone is interested in participating in this research project, please let us know and we will send you more information.

You can contact Bernadette directly by phone at 0411 952 974 or by email at igp@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au



Bernadette, Will and Katrina

Citizen Advocacy News

While we hoped that 2021 would dawn without COVID-19 present, that clearly isn't to be for some time yet. The impact on Citizen Advocacy and specifically the protégés remains uncertainty - uncertainty as to whether their advocates can visit, how their routines will be affected and when the situation will change.

Citizen Advocates are playing a valuable role as they provide a point of continuity and contact for protégés at a time where there is a risk of increasing isolation. While there are certainly times when visiting a protégé is not possible, there is significant value in other forms of contact such as by phone, FaceTime and even checking in with a service providing support. Just checking in lets people know that someone outside the service knows and cares about a person with disability.

A protégé contacted me recently and asked that his new Citizen Advocate send him a card in lockdown, so don't forget old fashioned mail as way of staying in touch!

In lovely news, Side By Side Advocacy welcomes two new Citizen Advocacy matches: Max & Angela and Lisa & Kate.

Deb Maio
Citizen Advocacy Program Coordinator



Max and Angela out celebrating International Day of People with Disability

Do you want to support Side By Side Advocacy's work? Become a member!

Do you believe in the importance of strong, independent advocacy?

Do you have a vision of a world where people with disability are equal and valued; where diversity is celebrated, needs are fulfilled and opportunities realised?

If you answered yes to both those questions, we invite you to consider becoming a member of Side By Side Advocacy! We would love to add more passionate voices to our network.

Annette and Rolf recently became members. Annette explained: "I have referred people with intellectual disability to Side By Side Advocacy for years and have always received great feedback. The NDIS has made the need for sophisticated advocacy advice even more important. Becoming a member is my way of supporting Side By Side's important work."

Rolf also wants to demonstrate his support for advocacy in a tangible way: "When I became aware of everything that Side By Side Advocacy does to support the rights of people with disability I had to become a member. There aren't many places where a person with intellectual disability can get help to navigate what can be a very complicated system. I became a member as a public show of support."

Send us an email or give us a call and we will send you a membership application!



New members, Annette and Rolf

Disability Information Helpline

Covid-19 has impacted people with disability in a range of negative ways. Not having accurate information can make things harder.

There is a Disability Information Helpline that provides information and referrals for people with disability who need help because of Covid-19.

If you ring the Disability Information Helpline they will listen, answer your questions and find information for you. They can also refer you to a service if that's what you need.

People can contact the Disability Information Helpline by calling 1800 643 787, through the National Relay Service on 133 677.

The Disability Information Helpline is available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (AEST). It is not available on national public holidays.

A person having a medical emergency should call 000.

There is a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) available for people who require support in another language. This support can be arranged by:

- calling the Disability Information Helpline on 1800 643 787 and asking for an interpreter. The counsellor will make the arrangements, or
- calling TIS on 131 450 and asking to be connected to the Disability Information Helpline on 1800 643 787.

The Disability Information Helpline is funded by the Australian Government.

Communication Tips

Side By Side Advocacy believes that all people are entitled to comprehensive and appropriate support to ensure full inclusion in the community.

An important part of facilitating inclusion can be supporting effective communication.

The NSW Council for Intellectual Disability has prepared some communication tips that may be helpful. A link to those tips is below:

[Communication Tips](#)

There is also a great Ted Talk by Dr Joanne Watson from Deakin University where she discusses how a network of support can assist someone who communicates informally to have their will and preferences understood and acted on.

[Dr Joanne Watson](#)

Meet the People of Side By Side Advocacy

Each edition we will get to know someone from the Side By Side Advocacy community. This month, Kim talks to staff member, Cathy Milne, about her work at Side By Side Advocacy.

Kim: What is your role at Side By Side Advocacy?

Cathy: I am an individual advocate at Side By Side Advocacy. In the past I have supported people with different issues - like talking with their financial manager about a fair budget, helping them to complete forms for Centrelink, helping them find a support coordinator who will listen to them, or even to find a new place to live. At the moment I am supporting people who want to make a submission to the Disability Royal Commission (DRC).

Kim: Can you tell me more about the Disability Royal Commission?

Cathy: The Disability Royal Commission is an inquiry set up by the Commonwealth Government to investigate 'Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability'. The Commissioners, who are leading the inquiry, have been told to find out how and why people with disability experience abuse more often than people without disability, and to advise the government on how to make the situation better in the future. They want to understand what life is like for people with disability. To do this, the Commissioners need to hear stories from as many different people with disability as possible. And they don't just want to hear about the bad things, they want to hear about the good things too - like what makes people feel safe and what made things easier at a time when life was difficult.

Kim: What's happening at the Disability Royal Commission now?

Cathy: In October 2020 the Commissioners released the Interim Report that summarises the work they had done so far. The report is available online and in the Side By Side Advocacy office if anyone would like to read it.

Here is a link: [Disability Royal Commission Interim Report](#)

The Commissioners acknowledge how difficult it can be to speak up or complain when you don't have people around to support you, and how frustrating it is if you have the courage to complain and nothing seems to change.

The Disability Royal Commission has released a schedule for Public Hearings for this year which will start with a hearing on Justice from 16 to 25 February 2021. The hearing will be in Brisbane, but all of the Public hearings are being held online, so anyone interested can still join in.

There are details about other public hearings on the Disability Royal Commission website:

Disability Royal Commission Schedule

The Disability Royal Commission also offers private sessions. Private sessions allow you to share your experiences with a Royal Commissioner in a confidential setting. Towards the end of last year, Commissioners began holding private sessions again via secure video conference. There is no update yet on when face to face private sessions will be available again, but the Private Sessions Team at the Disability Royal Commission are accepting requests for private sessions. They can discuss the different ways you might be able to speak directly with a Commissioner through a private hearing.

Kim: What would you suggest to people who are not sure if they want to share their story?

Cathy: If you aren't sure about whether or not to share your story, I would suggest talking to someone. There are lots of reasons you might want to share your story, and there are lots of places you can choose to share your story. The important thing is to work out what is right for you.

So if you aren't sure, talk to someone. There is lots of support available to help you decide.

Kim: Are there ways people can learn more?

Cathy: There are lots of ways to learn more. To start with, you can give me a call. I can answer your questions and chat with you about what you want to do. I can help you to work out whether sharing your story with the Disability Royal Commission is the right choice for you now and help you to prepare a submission if that is something you want to do.

Side By Side Advocacy will also be running a range of small group information sessions this year to discuss how to advocate for yourself and plan for a good life. This could be using an NDIS plans or just general planning. We will also be talking about effective ways to respond when things have gone wrong.

If you would like us to talk to you, or a group you are part of, about any of these topics, or about the Disability Royal Commission, let me know.

Kim: Is there anything else people should know about the Disability Royal Commission?

Cathy: There are some other Disability Royal Commission services that can provide you with specialist information are the National Counselling and Referral Service where you can talk to Counsellors from Blue Knot Foundation or Your Story Disability Legal Service where you can request a legal advice appointment.

You can contact Cathy by phone on 02 9808 5500 or by email at drc@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au



Cathy Milne

Dates for your calendar

18 February: What does it mean to have an intellectual disability? hosted by Foundations Forum

8 March: New date for Side By Side Advocacy Audit

8 March: International Women's Day

Have your say!

Do you have any suggestions about how we could do things better or differently at Side By

Side Advocacy?

If you do, we would love to hear from you! You can use the contact information below to tell us.

Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

Phone: (02) 9808 5500

Email: info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Website: www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Address: Shop 1, 30-32 Herbert Street, West Ryde, NSW 2114

Office hours: 9am to 5pm

Side By Side Advocacy is a short distance from West Ryde Railway Station.

There is a bus stop at both ends of Herbert Street.

There is time limited on street parking.

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.



