



side by side

The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy

Spring 2021

www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the Spring edition of Side By Side. We hope that you are safe and well during this challenging time.

Like everyone else across Sydney, Side By Side Advocacy has adapted the way we work during the lockdown.

We are still striving to provide effective advocacy and follow up your queries in a way that is safe and that suits your needs.

Side By Side Advocacy is speaking out about systemic issues impacting on people with disability. We joined with other advocacy organisations to draw attention to concerns about people with disability not getting access to the Covid-19 vaccination. Although people with disability were included in Phase 1A and 1B of the vaccine rollout, these phases have not been completed, leaving many people with disability at risk.

We are working towards new ways to communicate. This includes the development of a new, accessible website. When I use the word accessible, I mean that information will be easy to use and understand. I also mean that the website is being designed so that people with disability will be able to access information. We will keep you posted!

We are also planning more events. Following our May and June events, we asked people to suggest other events and/or information that would be useful. We have noted your suggestions and will be promoting new opportunities as soon as health advice allows.

There are also celebrations to prepare. 2021 is the 30th anniversary of Citizen Advocacy at Side By Side Advocacy. We are proud that the Citizen Advocacy program continues to operate and make a difference in people's lives.

Each Citizen Advocacy relationship is unique and has the potential to develop into an ongoing friendship that both safeguards and enriches the life of a person with unmet needs.

We believe that freely given relationships remain so critical because we know that funding alone does not result in people being safe or having a good life.

We also agree with Tom Kohler, the Coordinator for the Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy in the United States of America for the past 31 years, who observed that 'People with disabilities are ALWAYS at risk of getting less than the best.'

If Citizen Advocacy is new to you, you will have the chance to learn more when you read my interview with Kate Goulston who shared her experiences as a Citizen Advocate.

Read on to

- Help us celebrate 30 years of Citizen Advocacy
- Consider becoming a Citizen Advocate
- Hear what is happening in the Inclusive Governance Project
- Get some Easy Read information about Coronavirus
- Find out about a new Covid-19 check-in card
- Learn about the Justice Advocacy Service at IDRS
- Watch videos about the power of a positive introduction
- Hear about a vacancy on the Side By Side Advocacy Board
- Get details about a new role at Side By Side Advocacy
- Mark some dates in your calendar for upcoming events and happenings
- 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

Help us Celebrate 30 years of Citizen Advocacy!

International Day of People with Disability is held in December each year in many countries. The day aims to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability and celebrate their achievements and contributions.

This year, Side By Side Advocacy will be placing the focus on Citizen Advocacy during these celebrations.

For 30 years, the organisation has facilitated matches between people with intellectual disability with unmet needs and members of the community – first as

Citizen Advocacy Ryde Hunter's Hill and then as Side By Side Advocacy.

Side By Side Advocacy started out as Citizen Advocacy Ryde - Hunters Hill. In 1989 a steering committee was established to investigate the feasibility of setting up a Citizen Advocacy program to address the unmet needs of people with intellectual disability living in the Ryde and Hunter's Hill local government areas. One of the driving forces was John Roarty, who wrote forcefully about his experience of living in an institutional context in his book, *Captives of Care*. The steering committee was successful and the association known as Citizen Advocacy Ryde Hunter's Hill was incorporated in 1991.

Citizen Advocacy Program participants are invited to help us plan the event. You can indicate your interest and/or share your ideas with Kim and Deb via email at: eo@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

You can also phone Kim to discuss your ideas on 02 9808 5500.

More information about the celebration will be distributed closer to the date.



Have you thought about becoming a Citizen Advocate?

Citizen Advocacy aims to recognise, promote, protect and defend the rights, needs and interests of people with intellectual disability who are at risk of abuse, neglect and/or social isolation.

It does this by establishing and supporting one-to-one relationships between a person with a disability who has unmet needs and a responsible citizen who is interested in having a long term connection with that person.

If you think you could be a friend, supporter and ally to a person with an intellectual disability, contact the Citizen Advocacy Coordinator, Deb Maio, at Side By Side Advocacy.

Deb can be reached on 0424 187 974 or ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

You will be offered training and ongoing support to assist you to make a real difference in the life of a person with intellectual disability.

Inclusive Governance Project Update

For those of you who are regular readers of Side By Side, you may be aware of Side By Side Advocacy's Inclusive Governance Project. This project aims to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disability on boards and management committees.

Working in lockdown has presented some challenges for the Project. We were also sad to say goodbye to Naomi, a Social Work student who made a great contribution to the Inclusive Governance Project team during her placement.

We are working hard and adapting to keep the project on track.

Weekly Zoom sessions between Bernadette, Katrina and Will are helping to

keep us connected and enabling valuable input from the co-researchers.

Interviews with the research participants are also continuing via Zoom whenever possible.

Prior to lockdown, Will and Katrina created videos to explain the project. These will be available when the new Side By Side website is launched.

Just a reminder that we are still interested in speaking with people who have had experience either serving on a Board or supporting people who are on a Board. We are interested in speaking with people with and without an intellectual disability.

If you are interested in finding out more about how to participate in this project please contact Bernadette, who would be happy to talk to you.

Bernadette's contact details are 0411 952 974 or igp@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au



Will, Katrina and Naomi prepare to make a video

Naomi says goodbye

My name is Naomi and I am in my final year as a social work student. I was lucky to complete my first placement at Side By Side Advocacy and to be involved in the Inclusive Governance Project.

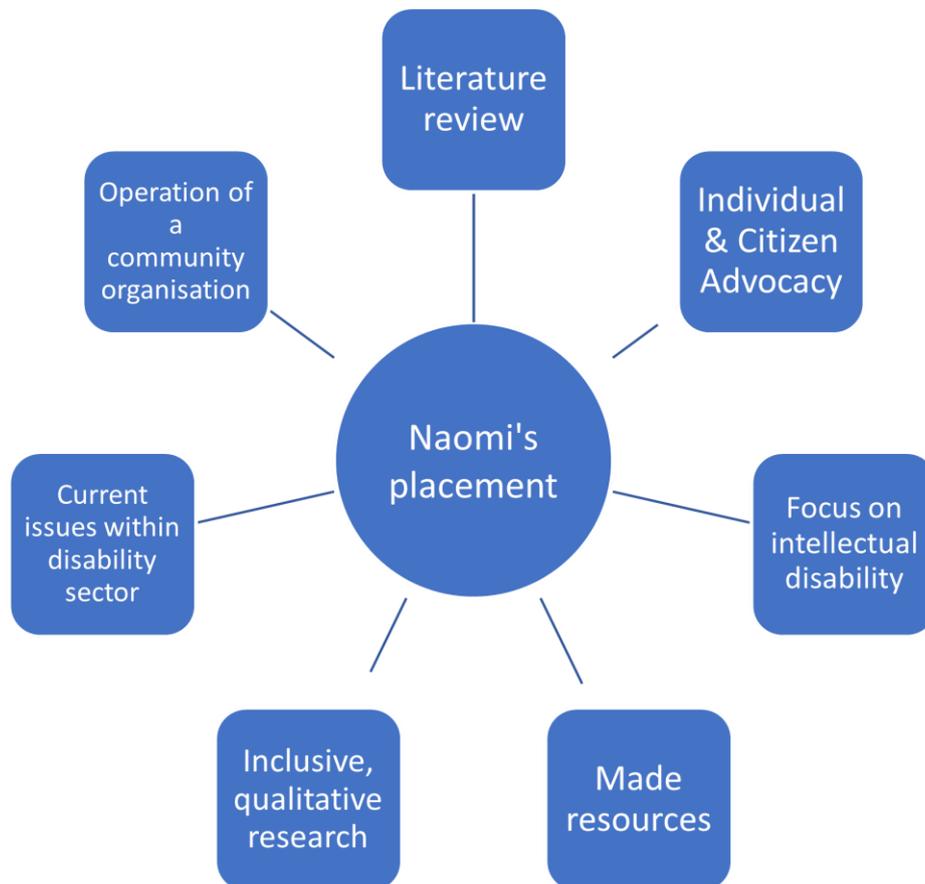
A large part of my role involved research and I was able to learn more about what inclusion involves and hear some ways organisations are already facilitating meaningful participation for people with intellectual disability. I was also able to find out some of the barriers people with intellectual disability face in accessing and holding leadership positions.

I found that one way to facilitate inclusion is making information available in accessible formats like Easy Read. It sounds obvious but it doesn't always happen. Another is to make sure that people with intellectual disability are encouraged to seek leadership opportunities.

I hope that my contribution to the literature review will assist the Inclusive Governance Team for the rest of the project.

I am excited to find out what recommendations they will come up with and hope to incorporate their findings about meaningful inclusion in my future career.

This opportunity to learn more about how an advocacy organisation works and how to work *with* and not *for* people with intellectual disability was an experience I'll value and take with me on to my next placement and for the rest of my work in the future!



What went on during Naomi's Inclusive Governance Project Placement

Easy Read information about Coronavirus

The Council for Intellectual Disability has developed some resources about Coronavirus.

These include the [latest rules](#) in Easy Read format.

There are also [videos](#) about Coronavirus. To find these videos, scroll down the page past the Easy Read and advocacy work sections.

Here is a link to information that you, or people you support, may find helpful: [Information about Coronavirus](#)

Covid-19 check in card for people without mobile phones

You can now get a COVID-19 check-in card. It provides a way to check in electronically without a smartphone.

The COVID-19 check-in card is a hard copy card with a unique QR code that contains a person's registered contact details.

You need to register to get a card. Once you have the card, you can present your card and have it scanned by a business as an alternative electronic check-in method.

Your check-in information will be available for NSW Health's contact tracing team in the event of a positive COVID-19 case.

Here is a link to obtain a card: [Obtaining a Covid-19 check in card](#)

Justice Advocacy Service (JAS)

The Justice Advocacy Service (JAS) supports people with cognitive impairment in contact with the NSW criminal justice system.

This could be as a victim, a witness, a suspect or a defendant.

Their role is to help people with cognitive impairment to exercise their rights and fully participate in the process.

A cognitive impairment can include:

- intellectual disability
- dementia

- an acquired brain injury
- drug or alcohol related brain damage, including fetal alcohol spectrum disorder,
- autism spectrum disorder.

A potential client does not need to provide evidence of cognitive impairment to access the service. If police, court, legal representatives, correctional officers or other stakeholder believes the person may have a cognitive impairment, a referral can be made by calling JAS on 1300 665 908

Here is a link to more information: [Intellectual Disability Rights Service – Justice Advocacy Service](#)

The power of a positive introduction

Many people with intellectual disability continue to experience limited social opportunities. They also engage with people who have low expectations about what their life can include.

Advocates, family members, friends and other allies can do some simple things to help change those expectations and facilitate meaningful engagement.

One very simple but often effective idea relates to the benefits of a positive introduction to a person with disability. A positive introduction can open up topics of conversation related to a person's interests and counter deficit-based assumptions and language.

If you would like to put this idea into action, you may be interested in this video created by the Community Resource Unit featuring Lindie Brengman.

Lindie discusses how she learnt to lead conversations with her daughter's strengths and contributions. Although Lindie is talking about a child, the same approach could be helpful for a person of any age. The video is 6 minutes.

Lindie Brengman - [The power of a positive introduction](#)

Janet Klees also shares some insights about the power of a positive introduction for a person of any age. Janet has been involved in the lives of people with disabilities, their families, and allies in community for over 30 years. The sound quality is slightly problematic but Janet shares numerous ideas in this brief 2.08 minute video.

[Janet Klees – The power of a positive introduction](#)

Join our Board of Management!

Side By Side Advocacy currently has a vacancy on our Board of Management. This unpaid role would be suitable for someone who has the time, skill, energy and motivation to work for social justice for people with disability.

We are particularly interested in hearing from you if any of the following describe you • Experience on a not for profit Board of Management • Law, business or financial acumen • Strong ties with a culturally and linguistically diverse community or communities • Are a person with lived experience of disability.

If you would like more information about this opportunity to make a difference click: [Consider joining the Side By Side Advocacy Board](#) or email board.sidebysideadvocacy@gmail.com

Come and work with us!

Side By Side Advocacy has a new role in the Citizen Advocacy team. You would be working alongside Citizen Advocacy Program Coordinator, Deb Maio, to implement the program.

Read the advertisement in Ethical Jobs to find out more!

[Citizen Advocacy Assistant Coordinator Role](#)

If you know someone the role could suit, it would be much appreciated if you could pass on the details.

If you would like to discuss the role, contact Kim on 02 9808 5500 or eo@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Meet the People of Side By Side Advocacy

In each edition of Side By Side we get to know someone from the Side By Side Advocacy community. This month, Kim talks to Citizen Advocate, Kate Goulston.

Kim: Could you tell me a little about yourself?

Kate: I live in Sydney with my family and enjoy cooking – particularly Italian food - and travel. My husband and I operate a boutique travel business located in St Leonards. We have worked together in the business for 12 years, developing and operating small group tours to international destinations. I also have two daughters, the youngest one currently completing Year 12.

Kim: When did you first connect with Side By Side Advocacy?

Kate: I made contact in mid-2020 so it's less than a year.

Kim: What prompted you to get involved?

Kate: It was a combination of factors. Firstly, I was heading towards becoming an empty nester with one daughter living full time in Melbourne and our second preparing to study in the ACT. Secondly, and quite dramatically, was the onset of the international travel ban which has brought about a big change to my usual workload. I like to call it a forced sabbatical.

I felt a strong urge to use the spare time that had become available in a positive and productive way. I spent some time researching volunteering opportunities in my local community and came across Side By Side Advocacy on the NSW Volunteering website. It sounded like it could be a good fit, so I made contact to find out what was involved.

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

Kate: I have taken on the role of Citizen Advocate. I have met and been paired with a lovely person of about my age. Lisa lives in a group home and while she has her health and housing needs met by carers, what she misses out on are the "extras" of life.

Kim: What does your role involve?

Kate: The way I currently see my role is to help Lisa access some of the activities and interactions in life that we all take for granted. I plan things which involve being out and about, but which are not part of her normal routine. So, we will go on picnics, we go to the movies, to a coffee shop, to buy some goodies at a bakery or we just walk the dog together. I try and think about outings which she can enjoy, and which bring her positive engagement with others in the community.

I imagine that as I get to know her better my role will change. I am initially attempting to establish a good connection and good rapport.

Over time, the advocacy part will evolve. There is a meeting coming up that I plan to attend and that may require me to speak up or ask questions.

Kim: What difference do you think having a Citizen Advocate makes for Lisa?

Kate: It gives her something to look forward to. I know that she enjoys our outings as we spend a lot of time planning what we'll do the next time we meet. Us talking about possible fun things makes up a big part of our conversation.

Kim: What difference do you think it makes for you?

Kate: When I first started as a Citizen Advocate, I felt some trepidation. It was all new to me – I have never done anything like it before. Now it's an uplifting experience. There's no more nervousness.

When it became clear that Lisa was enjoying herself, trusts me and looks forward to our outings I could relax. I feel good at the end of every day we spend together.

I think the most interesting thing about the role is that you can be surprised at what is achievable. As I get to know Lisa better, I feel more confident in planning activities which are more challenging, but which I hope will bring something new for her to experience.

The biggest and best day we had together was around her birthday. We began the day by preparing and packing sandwiches for a picnic. We then caught the ferry from Milsons Point to Barangaroo, taking along Cavoodle, Jaffa, for the ride (which was an adventure in itself). We arrived at Barangaroo and found a great spot on the foreshore to have our picnic lunch, and we had some surprise cupcakes for her birthday. We then made our way across the Harbour Bridge on foot, all the way back to our starting point. It was a huge day out, and Lisa did not skip a beat. There were moments we shared that were just amazing. Friendly people would approach her to ask her about the puppy, and she

interacted with them so freely and easily. The day was quite wonderful.

Kim: How does Side By Side Advocacy support your advocacy?

Kate: Side By Side Advocacy check in with me to see if I need support. I also meet other advocates from time to time to share ideas.

I also took part in some training with John Armstrong called Towards a Better Life that gave me a huge amount of insight into the service system. As I said, this is a new world for me, and I didn't have much grasp. As well as being exposed to new ideas, the training gave me a chance to meet some amazing people who work in the disability sector and are passionate about what they do. I found it encouraging.

Kim: Why is Citizen Advocacy important?

Kate: The role facilitates opportunities for people to have more of the good things in life. We all know that the chance to socialise, engage, celebrate important moments, and make connections is important.

What I hadn't realised was that some people with disability don't enjoy those simple things. The Citizen Advocacy role is there to speak up for people and help facilitate some of those simple interactions. Life should be about more than health care.

Kim: What would you say to someone thinking of being a Citizen Advocate?

Kate: If you have time and want to contribute, being a Citizen Advocate is an effective way to really make a difference in someone's life. It's a wonderful way to get involved.

If you would like to become more involved with Side By Side Advocacy, let us know and we can explore possibilities!



Lisa and Kate out an about

Dates for your calendar

9 September 2021: [RU OK Day](#)

9 September: [School to Work Webinars](#) – Next steps in years 9 and 10. Ask about other events in the series to support a secondary student with disability to get a job (Resourcing Inclusive Communities)

17 September: [My Home My Way](#) - 3 part online workshop begins. This workshop will be of particular interest to people thinking about how a person with disability might move into and thrive in a home they can call their own (Resourcing Inclusive Communities)

21 and 28 September: [Creating an Inclusive Life](#) – 2 part online workshop. This online workshop for people with disability and their families will explore how to

use an NDIS package to maximise the opportunities for a good life (Resourcing Inclusive Communities)

21 October 2021: Side By Side Advocacy Annual General Meeting

3 December 2021: International Day of People with Disability

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.



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