



side by side

The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy

Autumn 2022

www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Hello Everyone,

Advocates at Side By Side Advocacy are busier than ever. We are experiencing unprecedented demand for advocacy. Many of these requests are coming from people who report poor experiences with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). We are hearing that desperately needed supports are no longer being funded. We are being told that decisions are being made by the NDIA without consultation. We are witnessing the huge negative impact all of this is having on people with disability. Callers continue to tell us that extremely complicated NDIA processes are impossible for them to navigate.

The situation is made bleaker still due to insufficient advocacy resources. Side By Side Advocacy is not alone in experiencing unprecedented demand.

Callers we speak with have been turned away from multiple advocacy organisations who just do not have the resources to provide the much needed advocacy being requested.

Recent media reports have confirmed the swell of concern. In a Sydney Morning Herald article ([National Disability Insurance Agency spends millions on external legal costs, Rachel Clun, 17 February](#)) it was noted:

‘The agency running the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) spent nearly \$22 million on external legal fees in the last financial year as the number

of tribunal complaints about the scheme rose by more than 1000 in the last six months. In that period, complaints about NDIS plans to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal have increased by 400 per cent compared to the last six months of 2020, while complaints about accessing the scheme rose by 58 per cent over the same period.'

Of course, people continue to seek advocacy for issues in all areas of life including education and housing.

Side By Side Advocacy is focused on meeting the needs of people with disability seeking advocacy. We are working closely with other advocacy organisations. We are raising our concerns about unmet need with government. Our Disability Royal Commission Team is assisting people to share their stories of abuse, neglect and exploitation with the Disability Royal Commission.

Side By Side Advocacy's vision is of a world where all people are equal and valued, where diversity is celebrated, needs are fulfilled, and opportunities realised.

We will continue to strive for this vision and are encouraged that so many others are walking alongside us.

Read on to

- Get a Disability Royal Commission update
- Find out about a Senate report relating to the Disability Support Pension
- Meet new team members Kay and Isabella
- Consider getting involved with the Citizen Advocacy Program
- Access resources about employment
- Add some dates to your calendar
- Meet Inclusive Governance Team Co-researcher, Will Harding.

Kim Roots
Executive Officer - Side By Side Advocacy

Disability Royal Commission - there is still time to make a submission

The Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability.

There is still time to make submissions to the Disability Royal Commission.

The Disability Royal Commission will be closing registrations for private sessions on 30 June 2022.

Private sessions allow you to share your experiences with a Royal Commissioner in a confidential setting.

The Disability Royal Commission will close all submissions on 31 December 2022.

It has been suggested that setting these timeframes will ensure that submissions are able to contribute meaningfully to the final report.

The Disability Royal Commission is very keen to hear from people with disability with lived experience of

- Guardianship and administration
- Supported decision making
- Homelessness or being at risk of homelessness
- Boarding houses and hostels

The sharing of experiences from other contexts is also welcomed.

People can share examples of poor practices and poor outcomes. The Disability Royal Commission is also keen to learn about great practices and outcomes.

They want to hear stories about experiences as well as ideas for solutions.

If you are a person with disability with a story to share, you can contact Side By Side Advocacy to receive some guidance.

If you know a person with disability with a story to share, don't assume that they know about the Disability Royal Commission. We would appreciate you letting them know that they can contact us.

We can be reached at DRC@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or 02 9808 5500.



Senate Report - Disability Support Pension (DSP)

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) is the Australian Government's primary income support payment for people with a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment that prevents them from fully engaging in employment.

Major policy changes to the DSP since 2011 have tightened the eligibility criteria for the payment, reducing the number and rate of successful applications. At the same time, the number of people who receive unemployment payments from the Government who have a 'partial capacity to work' due to disability or illness has increased.

A report from October 2021 has noted that approximately 57 000 of 96 000

applications (59%) for the DSP were rejected ([More than one in two Disability Support Pension applications continue to be rejected, SBS](#)) .

Side By Side Advocacy advocates have observed firsthand the challenges that some applicants have navigating the application process.

A Senate committee has been considering the purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

The final report has made 30 recommendations that include:

- ‘...that the Australian Government provides additional funding to advocacy groups and community legal services to support Disability Support Pension claimants’
- ‘...that Services Australia improves the level of information provided to Disability Support Pension claimants when it rejects their claims. The committee envisages that such information would, amongst other things, clearly and comprehensively explain why a claim was rejected and, if relevant, provide guidance on specific evidentiary requirements, as well as detailed information on the review process.’
- ‘...that Services Australia, in consultation with key stakeholders, reviews all guidance material, publicly available information, and the claim form, with the aim of making them simpler, clearer, and genuinely accessible for claimants and those who support them.’

Here is a link to the report: [Purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension](#)

If you or a person you know needs assistance applying for the DSP, you can contact the [Welfare Rights Centre](#).

Welfare Rights Centre provides legal advice on Centrelink and social security matters to people in NSW.

Advice is provided over the phone.

Contact details are:

Phone: 02 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 (toll-free from outside Sydney metro area)

If you or the person with disability you know would benefit from assistance engaging with the Welfare Rights Centre, you can contact Side By Side Advocacy for assistance.

Meet our new team members

We have two new team members working with us at Side By Side Advocacy.

Kay will be working part time to assist us with bookkeeping. Kay says: 'It has been interesting to learn about Side By Side Advocacy and to understand the commitment and dedication of staff in supporting positive outcomes for people with disabilities.'

Isabella Christen is assisting Deb Maio in the Citizen Advocacy Program. Isabella says: 'It's great to work for Side By Side Advocacy where everyone is committed to contributing to positive change in the lives of people with disability. I have been impressed by the number of long-term relationships supported by the Citizen Advocacy Program.'



Kay and Isabella

Do you want to learn more about Citizen Advocacy?

Citizen Advocacy matches a local citizen with a person with intellectual disability who has unmet needs.

For some people with disability who opt to take part, the Citizen Advocate is the only person in their life who is not paid.

Relationships are long-term and sometimes last a lifetime. This long-term connection allows for the possibility of deeper understandings and for creative exploration of what could be possible.

Matches are supported by the Citizen Advocacy Program Coordinator at Side By Side Advocacy.

If you are interested to learn more about Citizen Advocacy and how you could get involved, we would love to hear from you.

You can contact Deb Maio on ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or call the Side By Side Advocacy Office on 02 9808 5500.

Employment for people with Disability

People with disability experience significant barriers to obtaining paid employment.

Australia ranks 21 out of 29 in the employment of people with disability among OECD countries.

Family Advocacy have brought together a range of information and resources to assist friends, family members and allies of people with disability explore a person with disability's interests and strengths to develop a work or volunteering role in their life.

Here is a link to those resources: [Ordinary lives – employment](#)

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 sat down with one of Side By Side Advocacy's team members, Will Harding, who shared what he's been working on.



Will Harding in the Side By Side Advocacy Boardroom

Kim: Tell me about yourself.

Will: I am part of the Inclusive Governance Project team. I work as a co-researcher. I've been working at Side By Side Advocacy since February 2021.

In my spare time, I like to play cricket and soccer and hang out with my friends.

Kim: What does your role at Side By Side Advocacy involve?

Will: Our research is about including people with intellectual disability on boards. We interview people with and without disability about their involvement on a board.

Kim: What do you enjoy about your role?

Will: I enjoy looking at how things can be more inclusive.

Kim: Who else is part of the team?

Will: Katrina and Bernadette. Katrina is a co-researcher and Bernadette leads the team.

Kim: What have you found out so far? Can you give us a taste of what you have learned?

Will: We have found out that it is important to have information that people can understand. That could be Easy Read or plain English formats – or something else.

We've also found that people with disability on boards do best when they have support before, during and after the meeting.

Kim: What is happening in the Inclusive Governance Project now?

Will: We are almost finished our research. We are now working on understanding what people have told us. We're also developing resources. We have been preparing presentations so we can help people understand the resources we are making.

Kim: Is there still time to get involved?

Will: Yes, we are still talking to people. The project ends in early 2023.

To find out more about the Inclusive Governance Project, have a look at these videos presented by Will and Katrina.

Inclusive Governance Introduction Video: [Introduction to the Inclusive Governance Project](#)

Inclusive Governance Recruitment Video: [Inclusive Governance Project Recruitment](#)

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

Dates for your calendar

8 March 2022: Multicultural Disability Advocacy is hosting an event in Merrylands for International Women's Day - [Break the Bias](#)

18 March 2022: Resourcing Inclusive Communities is running a workshop - [School to Work - A workshop about moving from school to work for students with disability](#) - Canterbury League Club - 26 Bridge Rd, Belmore

5 April 2022: Family Advocacy is presenting - [Advocacy and the NDIS Webinar](#) from 10-11.30am - A free webinar to guide families in their advocacy efforts, including in relation to the National Disability Insurance Agency

15 April 2022: Good Friday (Public Holiday)

17 April 2022: Easter Sunday (Public Holiday)

25 April 2022: Anzac Day (Public Holiday)

8 March 2022: International Women's Day

21 March 2022: International day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

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 disability to enable full and meaningful participation in the community.

We recognise that people with intellectual disability experience particular barriers in having their voices heard and needs met and for that reason we specialise in providing advocacy for people with intellectual disability.



side by side advocacy