



**side by side**

*The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy*

**Winter 2021**

[www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](http://www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

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Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the Winter edition of Side By Side.

We have been out and about meeting people across Sydney – most recently at Community Northern Beaches. It was terrific to speak with so many people and hear about the issues that matter to you. It is clear that advocacy remains critically important to navigate a complex system. Thank you to everyone who made us welcome!

We have also been hosting events about a range of topics including the NDIS and planning for the future. If you have missed previous workshops, there is another Planning for the Future workshop scheduled for 16 June 2021 in Dee Why. Check out the 'Dates for your calendar' section below for more information.

During all these conversations and all this busyness a piece of writing came to my attention that brings into focus a key reason why independent advocacy organisations remain so important. It was written by John Armstrong who is Chair of the Citizen Advocacy Trust. John was talking about the effectiveness of

Citizen Advocates but his words apply to all independent advocacy. John said:

'The single most influential ingredient that makes advocacy effective is its independence. Independence brings a freedom to act because no one else is "in their pocket". That is, no other relationship or obligation exists that restricts the voice of the advocate in representing the interests of the protégé.

This means the advocate is free to escalate an issue, should that be necessary, as far as needed to see a matter addressed. When advocacy is unlimited in its escalation potential, it sends a signal about the strength of the advocate's voice. Entities become more willing to respond to the advocates claims, lest they find themselves in much hotter water. It's the fear of this rather than any direct threat that gets such parties moving; they realise how far an advocate could go if need be.

In other words, the advocate has no divided loyalty or conflict of interest. It's another reason we say a citizen advocacy relationship is "free'. It's free to do the things that need to be done without being constrained by some other obligation or loyalty. They are in the protégé's corner and no one else.

Now that's potency.'

As someone who works alongside a team of committed advocates in an independent advocacy organisation, I could not agree more.

Read on to

- Get ideas about tenancy related advocacy
- Listen to a confronting podcast about continuing issues with support for people with disability
- Read about Disability Royal Commission submissions that highlight the importance of freely given relationships
- Check out some planning resources
- Find out about ways you can contribute to the work of Side By Side Advocacy
- Share your ideas about how Side By Side Advocacy can celebrate International Day of People with Disability
- Meet Side By Side Advocacy Board member, Steve MacDonald

- 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



**John Armstrong**

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## **Abuse and neglect continues to put people with disability at risk**

In 2020, the death of Ann Marie Smith shocked us all. Many people hoped that lessons would be learned and change would take place. But one year on, an advocacy organisation in Adelaide called Purple Orange has recorded a podcast that suggests it has not changed.

They heard from a woman called 'Nat' who said she is scared she is going to be the next Ann Marie Smith, due to the inadequacy of her support. Her understanding is that she is not the only one continuing to experience neglect.

Here is a link to the podcast: [Purple Orange Podcast](#)

Purple Orange is continuing to follow Nat's story. Here is a link to what has happened since the podcast: [Where is Nat at?](#)

This is a disturbing story. If you need to speak to someone, you can ring [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 1 or [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 224 636

If you, or someone you know has experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation, please contact us at Side By Side Advocacy. Phone us on 02 9808 5500 or email [info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

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## **Planning for the Future**

At Side By Side Advocacy we receive a lot of calls about the NDIS. People find it challenging to navigate the system of support. That is not surprising. The system is complex and keeps changing. But getting the support you need will be even harder if you haven't thought deeply about what you need and why. Happily, organisations across Australia have gathered together tools and stories to help you think about the question of what could be part of a good life for you or the person with disability you care about.

Check out the Resourcing Inclusive Communities website that includes useful resources about thinking about the future.

### [Resourcing Inclusive Communities](#)

See also the Community Resource Unit website that has gathered a range of resources about bringing the good life to life.

### [Bringing the good life to life](#)

## The Good Life

Bringing the Good Life to Life: a website that offers strategies to create and sustain this for a person with disability.



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### A positive vision for the Disability Royal Commission

The Disability Royal Commission (DRC) continues to investigate the impacts of formal human services on the lives of people. Side By Side Advocacy has been assisting people to know more about the DRC and to share their stories.

As well as the DRC hearing the important stories of abuse, neglect and exploitation Side By Side Advocacy is keen for the DRC to hear examples of people living with disability who experience the good things of life: home, security, relationship commitments, growth and learning, valued roles, good health, financial security, contribution to others, loving and being loved, etc.

The absence of such a perspective will make it hard for the DRC to form a valid and positive vision of the kind of lives people with disability can lead. Without such a vision they may offer more limited recommendations that result in limited opportunities for change.

Citizen Advocates supported by Side By Side Advocacy are contributing insights into the transformative nature that freely given relationship can make.

We will be sharing stories that demonstrate the potency of Citizen Advocacy that cannot be duplicated by paid relationships and formalised systems.

If you would like to learn more about the Disability Royal Commission, contact Cathy on 02 9808 5500

If you would like to learn more about Citizen Advocacy, contact Deb on 02 9808 5500

### **Would you like to support the work of Side By Side Advocacy?**

There are many ways you can contribute to the work of Side By Side Advocacy. We note a few of those ways below.

**You can tell people about Side By Side Advocacy.** Many people do not know that they can access free advocacy. You can forward the Side By Side Advocacy newsletter, discuss Side By Side Advocacy at team meetings, invite Side By Side Advocacy to speak to your organisation, or share information with friends.

**You can volunteer.** We are on the lookout for someone with graphic design skills and someone with experience writing funding submissions. If that is you, we would love to hear from you.

**You can make a donation.** As we near the end of the financial year, you may be thinking about donating to your favourite not for profit organisation. Keep Side By Side Advocacy in mind.

Side By Side Advocacy envisages a world where people are equal and valued, where diversity is celebrated, needs are fulfilled and opportunities realised.

Side By Side Advocacy welcomes donations that allow us to do more to progress that vision. Even a small donation can assist us to get new equipment or provide training for volunteers.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Email Kim if you would like to talk about ways you can get involved at:  
eo@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

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## Help us plan for International Day of People with Disability

[International Day of People with Disability](#) is held on 3 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.

Since 2009, Side By Side Advocacy has hosted a number of celebratory cocktail parties to mark the occasion.

In 2020, Covid-19 made us rethink a large scale event. Instead, we hosted a series of smaller gatherings where we celebrated in locations around Sydney.

The Board and staff of Side By Side Advocacy has started planning for 2021 and we would love to hear your ideas.

There is an event planning kit that may stimulate your creativity: [International Day of People with Disability Event Planning Kit](#)

Get in touch to share your best experiences celebrating International Day of People with Disability and your ideas about how Side By Side Advocacy could celebrate the day.

You can share your ideas with Kim via email at:  
eo@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

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



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## Meet the People of Side By Side Advocacy

In each edition of Side By Side we will get to know someone from the Side By Side Advocacy community. This month, Kim talks to multi talented Board member, Steve MacDonald.

**Kim:** Can you tell me about yourself?

**Steve:** I'm originally from England and moved to Australia in 2004. I've worked in various IT roles for over 20 years, doing help desk ("Have you tried turning it off and back on again?"), systems administration ("What does that flashing red light mean?") and IT security ("Sorry, no, your password isn't allowed to be just password1") among other things. One of my favourite things to do in IT is train people and help them get the most out of technology.

**Kim:** How did you first hear about Side By Side Advocacy?

**Steve:** I started a new job in 2008 which meant I was no longer directly helping people with computers, which is what I enjoy about IT, so I looked for volunteer opportunities for non-profit organisations that needed IT assistance and Side By Side was the first I saw! So I didn't initially know what Side By Side did, but I quickly grew to know about and admire the organisation and its important work.

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

**Steve:** I am a member of the Board. We meet regularly to oversee the legal and financial operation of the organisation. We also have a range of other responsibilities like promoting the work of Side By Side Advocacy and representing the organisation at events.

**Kim:** What does your role involve?

**Steve:** Reviewing financial, legal, strategic and other aspects of the organisation is a major part. Attending monthly meetings to discuss and approve (or reject if necessary) things which impact the organisation. This year we are developing a new strategic plan to guide the work of the organisation.

**Kim:** Have you had other roles at Side By Side Advocacy?

**Steve:** I was Vice Chair of the Board for a couple of years until 2016, when I moved away from Sydney for a few years so I wasn't able to continue the role.

Because of my IT experience, I have also provided advice about cybersecurity and assisted with IT related issues generally.

**Kim:** What do you find satisfying about your role?

**Steve:** Everything! Side By Side's work helping people with intellectual disability is one of the most important things I can think of, and it's a privilege to be able to help. I think the staff and my fellow Board members are wonderful people and I enjoy working with them.

**Kim:** What would you say to someone thinking about getting involved with Side By Side Advocacy as a volunteer or member?

**Steve:** I would suggest getting familiar with the work of the organisation and making sure it resonates with you. If it does, make contact to discuss what you have in mind. There are lots of opportunities and it is important that you embrace a role that suits your availability and the contribution you would like to make.

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



**Board Member Steve MacDonald**

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## Dates for your calendar

9 June 2021: [Finding work - the next steps in years 11 and 12](#) - a webinar with Resourcing Inclusive Communities for family members of secondary students with disability who are thinking about what to do after school

10 June 2021: [One of the Kids](#) - a workshop in Ashfield about inclusive education facilitated by Family Advocacy

23 June 2021: [One of the Kids](#) - a workshop in Sutherland about inclusive education facilitated by Family Advocacy

16 June 2021: [Planning for the Future workshop in Dee Why](#) for friends, families and allies of people with intellectual disability presented by Side By Side Advocacy

4 – 11 July 2021: NAIDOC week - [See NAIDOC week resources](#)

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## 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.

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### Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

**Phone:** (02) 9808 5500

**Email:** [info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

**Website:** [www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](http://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.**



**side by side advocacy**