



SUNSHINE COAST
**CITIZEN
ADVOCACY**



Why Citizen Advocacy is Important

People with intellectual disability are especially vulnerable to many bad things happening in their life because of a poor capacity to foresee the consequences of actions while at the same time being held in particularly low status in the eyes of western society as indicated by the extremely low expectations society generally holds towards such people. These low expectations might be generally said to reflect the rejection felt towards someone with an intellectual disability and the many negative images and ideas that accompany such rejection from within the minds of other people.

Many bad experiences can befall a person because of the negative impressions and expectations of others. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy starting with the negative ideas from almost everyone one encounters that plays itself out in real life events: being treated as an eternal child and other negative roles, being surrounded by other negative images that strip one of human qualities, having every aspect of one's life controlled by other parties even to the point of losing freedom, losing touch with their culture and learning mostly about what is strange and peculiar, but not knowing very much about what is ordinary and typical; having most even all of one's relationships with frequently changing and paid people; experiencing many events that can facilitate one's death.

These events are so negative and leave such dramatic social, emotional and sometimes physical scars, that they can be said to constitute "wounds".

These potentials and actual experiences leave this group of people especially vulnerable because they are not in a strong position to solve and resolve these events themselves, nor do they have other relationship commitments to do so; hence the need for Citizen Advocacy. (definition by the international Citizen Advocacy Safeguard group in 1990)

Citizen Advocacy is a means to promote, protect and defend the welfare and interests of, and justice for, persons are impaired in competence, or diminished in status, or seriously physically isolated, through one-to-one voluntary commitments made to them by people of relevant competencies.

Citizen Advocates strive to represent the interests of a person as if they were the advocate's own; therefore, the advocates must be sufficiently free from conflict of interest.

Citizen Advocates are supported by the Citizen Advocacy office, and choose from a wide range of functions and roles.

Some of these commitments may last for life.

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Advocate Independence and loyalty to a person with a disability (Protege)

Advocate independence and loyalty to the protégé. Effective advocacy is informed by a set of principles. Citizen Advocacy is no different. Fundamentally, advocates need to be independent. This is especially true when a protégé's life is surrounded by formal paid service requiring an advocate to see themselves as completely independent of those structures.

They will not receive any payment or any kick-back for their advocacy. A citizen advocate will not be receiving course credits for being an advocate or time off with pay from an employer for being an advocate. Each of these would initiate third party inducements to conduct the advocacy a certain way or in a certain direction. The advocacy would likely only last as long as the inducement.

Citizen advocacy is free, remaining independent in order to be effective.

Another nuance to this principle is how the advocate represents and gives voice the protégé's perspective. Other parties can bring formidable impressions reflective of their own expedient interests (in spite of any claims to the contrary) that do not favour the protégé's interests. It will be the citizen advocate who seeks to define the situation uniquely from the protégé's perspective. In other words, the advocate is loyal to the protégé.

That is why citizen advocates need to be careful that their association and interactions with staff and service leaders do not compromise their protégé's perspective and their loyalty to the protégé and their interests. They are in their corner and no one else's.

Throughout this newsletter we have added a number of relationship stories that illustrate what independent Citizen Advocates can achieve, and the wonderful relationships that develop.

Advocates and protégé's have a way of showing others how lives can be made better in significant ways.

Janice Rustus

Relationships - what we can be mindful of!

Peter and Bob

Bob Lee was the coordinator of the Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy program for several decades and is now an advocate for Peter. Here Bob reflects on some of what that means.

Soon after becoming a Citizen Advocate, I remember having a long conversation with an acquaintance about what my role would be. They understood that from time to time people with disability might need advocacy, but really could not understand why it needed to be ongoing. They even worried that my long-term involvement could be seen as somewhat patronising to some observers.

The essence of Citizen Advocacy is that it is about prevention. It's about how ordinary people in a community can take action to prevent bad things happening to people who are isolated and alone and especially where isolation itself heightens that vulnerability. We know that it is the relationships we have with other people that makes our lives safe, secure and satisfying. In other words, a really good way to protect people and help them have the good life we all value, is for them to have relationships with others. A good start is to have at least one.

When that one relationship is with a Citizen Advocate, we can expect that they will be mindful of some important things. We can expect that the Citizen Advocate will keep a watchful eye out to prevent exploitation and abuse. We can expect that the Citizen Advocate will notice when their protégé is isolated and alone and will take personal action to remedy that.

When something needs to be said, we can expect that the Citizen Advocate will be the one who speaks out, and we can expect that the Citizen Advocate will know this... preventing bad things happening isn't done by reacting after the event.

It's done by being around, being involved in a person's life, knowing what's happening, and being there for the long-term.

So no, there's nothing patronising about a Citizen Advocate

preventing a vulnerable person experiencing harm. For a community that values people with disability, it's just common sense

Bob Lee



Little Miss I and I

When I was first asked if I would consider being an advocate, I must admit I was a little hesitant. I was already juggling a huge workload with a new business, limited time being spent with my own family and very much almost ZERO time for myself.

Les was amazing at our first meeting, he explained the process from his role, the advocate's role and how the matching process transforms. Les gave me a brief on the family and the Little Miss I.

Les's final words were "you choose how much or little you are involved and if it ever gets too much we are always here to support you and we will respect any decision you make"

At this point he left me to process my role and go home to speak with my family.



My family was very supportive but had concerns about the impact it would have on my already overfilled plate and what impact it would have on them. But I knew in my heart it was already a yes as I have always had a passion for giving back to our community and to be a role model for my children. With my family support I called Les the following day and arranged to meet with Little Miss I and the family.

The relationship between Little Miss I and I grew organically from the moment we laid eyes on each other. She was just divine! I spent an hour with little Miss sitting on my lap whilst I chatted with grandma and Les. It was

amazing how our lives were intertwined already with similar interests, lived experiences and personalities. WOW he is clever! With all the ducks lined in a row I was in'.

Over the next few weeks, Grandma and I communicated through phone calls and text messages going through the formal introductions, also at the time assisting grandma with advice and guidance on certain important issues whilst getting to know each other more. I wanted my family involved every step of the way and there was no better way to get to know me than meeting my family.

The next chapter evolved organically and Little Miss I became a part

of our family. We have regular weekend sleepovers, she has come to my children's sporting games, birthday parties and social outings. Little Miss I is now a very well-known personality within our own social community.

Grandma knows we are always here for support when needed. We only get involved when asked and are mindful that we are only a small piece of Little Miss I's puzzle, but we are a part of her extended family. Whilst it has only been 6 months it feels like she has been in our lives forever. The role of Citizen Advocate is not a solo role for me but a family affair and we are all very blessed to have Little Miss I in our lives.

Thank you Les and team for the honour



A role model, a teacher, a protector and a dear friend Jason and Keith

*A Coordinators thoughts of an advocate who has recently passed away,
Keith and Jason became an important part in each others life!*

When I first met Jason I quickly learned that his passion in life was art. Painting, drawing, sketching and using anything that came to hand. He was an artist, and like any young artist who takes his work seriously, he needed the support, encouragement and guidance of someone who was experienced and knowledgeable about the art world.

Jason lived in Mapleton so I started to speak to people I knew in the area and very quickly heard about a man who was recently retired, was an artist, and most importantly, was a Good Bloke. No-one here will be surprised to hear that Keith said yes, and in April of 2001, Jason (the young artist) became a Protégé of the well respected Mr Keith East (the older experienced artist).



Keith took on his role with his usual thoughtful and careful approach. He organised lessons for his young protégé, encouraged him to start painting using quality materials he had never used before, stretched canvases, and gave advice about technique.

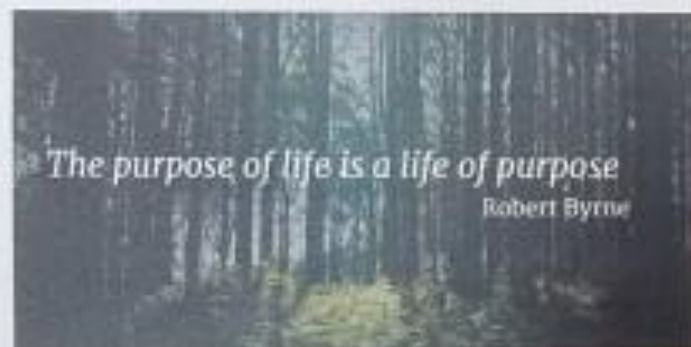
As Jason developed his skills, Keith started planning for the career he felt that Jason had ahead of him. He submitted a work in a local art show and celebrated when the unknown local artist Jason surprised the local art community with his win. Keith encouraged, and sometimes cajoled Jason

to produce a body of work for his first major exhibition at the Noosa Regional Art Gallery. While this was happening, Keith found that he had to keep a sharp eye out, and be ready to protect Jason from those who might have had plans to exploit his success.

Keith and Jason have been an important part of each other's lives for as long as they have known each other. Keith has been a role model, a teacher, a protector and a dear friend for Jason.

Since 2001 I have had the privilege of sharing with Keith and his mother, the satisfaction of seeing how Keith's involvement has guided Jason in becoming the person he is today.

Keith certainly was a good bloke, and we will all miss him very much.



BACK TO FAMILY Elizabeth and Ronda

Thirty-five years was a long time to wait for someone to ask the question she most wanted to hear. When you can't speak, or read, or write, you need someone who can put themselves in your shoes, in your skin and looking through your eyes. Someone who is prepared to understand that what is most important to you is just what is most important to everyone else. Someone who wants you to have the good life that others have.

Ronda asked that question because she wasn't sitting there with a "case", or a "client", she was sitting with a friend she loved. She realised that the violence, abuse and loneliness her friend had experienced was a consequence of something that was completely missing in her life. So she asked the question "Would you like to try to find your family?"

Elizabeth was a teenager when she came to Australia from New Zealand. She did not know why she was coming here or how long she would be staying and, most distressingly for someone with such strong family connections, she never had the opportunity to say goodbye to the ones she loved. Her family searched for her, even registering her as a missing person, but she seemed to have disappeared. In Australia, Elizabeth waited for the day she could go home. Waited and waited, but the day never came.

Elizabeth became known in her local community as a cheerful, loving and thoughtful person. She lived a quiet life, well protected from anyone who might harm her. She made the most of the life she had but she still waited.



Then disaster struck and Elizabeth was plunged into a cycle of despair, loneliness and shocking abuse. The man who had brought her to Australia, had cared for her and protected her, died after a long illness. Government bureaucrats, now responsible for her care, moved a man Elizabeth did not know into her home. She began to be abused almost immediately, and life became intolerable in what was previously a quiet, harmonious family home.

Elizabeth could not ask, but she had another question. Who will protect me now? Ronda heard about Citizen Advocacy by listening to an



interview on ABC radio while she was driving home from another long day at work. She was intrigued by the idea that ordinary people in the community can provide what vulnerable and isolated people with disability need most and so rarely get.

That what really makes us safe, secure, and happy, are the relationships that we have with others. Having people in our lives who value us, protect us when we need it, and advocate for us when we need that. What those vulnerable and isolated people need most from the community they live in is to be valued, protected and "spoken up for" by at least one person. It's a simple idea, it's one that works, and for many people it's very refreshing to find that being able to do something so life changing is within the reach of every ordinary citizen.

When Ronda and Elizabeth met, they formed a strong bond almost immediately. Even though Elizabeth was limited to yes and no answers, good conversation was no problem and Ronda found out much about Elizabeth that the "experts" never knew. What Ronda knew was how to ask the right questions. They found that they had much in common. They were both strong women with a firm belief in fairness and justice. Ronda learned more about the abuse Elizabeth was experiencing and was shocked that the people who were responsible for her situation, who should have known better, were refusing to correct their terrible decisions.

Ronda immediately took steps to protect Elizabeth from harm. She knew that the community expected that their Government would care for vulnerable people with disability, give them a good life, and at the very least protect them from harm. After all that's one of the reasons people pay taxes. They certainly don't expect that their taxes will be used to support a situation where a vulnerable woman with a disability is forced to live with black eyes, bruises and regular abuse.

For years Ronda attended meetings, wrote letters and made phone calls, in a concerted effort to see Elizabeth "get a fair go" from the people who controlled her life. However, her involvement wasn't all about challenging wrongdoers. Ronda and Elizabeth became well known, and were often seen together about town shopping, at the movies, swimming, and at the club listening to music with wine glasses in hand. Ronda found some more things about Elizabeth. She discovered Elizabeth's brave and adventurous side when she took to surfing with great enthusiasm. Ronda was always looking for ways that Elizabeth could meet more people

and make more friends. She knew that what makes for a safe, secure and satisfying life are the personal relationships we have with others. More people in Elizabeth's life, especially when no family were around, meant more safety, simple as that! One of the ways Ronda used to get other people involved was to start a Facebook page for Elizabeth. It worked well and a whole world of social media opened up.

Then one day... they were checking Facebook... and Ronda asked... "Would you like to try to find your family?" Elizabeth's smile lit up. Finally, after all these years, the question had come that she had been waiting for. Events moved quickly. Ronda found a Facebook group family page in New Zealand with Elizabeth's name. A message was quickly composed and sent.

All it took for the whole world to change was ten short minutes. The first message was heartbreaking. "Can this really be my sister we have been looking for all these years?" Soon after came other messages, and photographs, from brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, a whole extended family wildly excited to hear that the long lost family member was finally back in their lives.

Elizabeth's family asked Ronda to bring her to New Zealand for a very important family event. Arrangements were quickly made and Ronda and Elizabeth flew to New Zealand for the great family reunion. A remarkable thing happened during the trip. Elizabeth left Australia as a vulnerable woman with disability, seen by bureaucrats as a difficult problem they needed to solve.

She arrived in New Zealand and became a much loved and respected Matriarch in her family, a Sister, an Aunt, a Great Aunt and because her family had remembered her, an important traditional land owner. It became clear that Elizabeth needed to be home permanently with her family. She wanted it, and her family wanted it, but Ronda knew that the last thing that Elizabeth needed was more uncertainty in her life. So they did the responsible thing. Reluctantly Elizabeth returned to Australia and Ronda set about doing the many things that needed to be done. She negotiated, she cajoled, she demanded and she arranged for Elizabeth to have a safe and secure life with her family in New Zealand and then she arranged some more.

When it was all done, Elizabeth had a home waiting for her with some of her family living just around the corner. She had people ready to support her who respected her. She was finally ready to be back in the embrace of her family and her community. Elizabeth and Ronda left for New Zealand.



farewelled by those who loved Elizabeth, shared her joy at going home, and celebrated her finally having what she had silently waited for all those long years.

The lesson for all of us from Elizabeth's experiences, is that no amount of Government funding, new policies, professional expertise, or good intentions can guarantee that vulnerable people like Elizabeth will always be protected from harm and permitted to have the good life they deserve.

Ronda and Elizabeth's experiences are a clear demonstration that we should never just "leave it to the experts". People with disability also need ordinary citizens to do what Ronda has done. To watch what the experts are doing, or not doing. To speak up! To get personally involved! To be loyal, courageous and persistent so that wrongs will be righted, and vulnerable people really will be safe and secure in our community.

The love of a
FAMILY
is life's greatest blessing

Clarity of staff function

Every principle of Citizen Advocacy is designed to strengthen the relationship between the advocate and the protégé. Thus, the third principle of Citizen Advocacy is the clarity of staff function.

This principle exists to ensure that Citizen Advocacy Coordinators do not encroach on the role of an advocate. The role of coordinators is to make many good matches, not to become the advocate nor control them and consequently undermine the advocates role. Without clarity regarding their function, coordinators could find themselves attending meetings that are the advocates to attend, meeting with the protégé, taking regular phone calls and visits from the protégé rather than re-directing them back to the advocate.

After all, the coordinator did meet the protégé before the advocate did, so its easy to appreciate why a certain bond might develop between the coordinator and protégé. Yet its exactly for that reason that this principle exists; to prevent the coordinator becoming the prime relationship and undermining the citizen advocate.

Its easy too, especially for new advocates, to see the coordinator as the holder of all advocacy expertise and to perhaps seek their direct involvement in the protégé's matters. Certainly, coordinators can be a reference point and a sharer of ideas for an advocate but remain alert to the potential to drift into the advocate's territory and suck the life out of their relationship.

**Coordinators strengthen the advocates capacity to act,
and not undermine it.**

The significance of a long term relationships June and I

My short story emphasises the vulnerability for many people with disability and in particular for a lady that I have been a Citizen advocate for the past sixteen and a half years. During these years there have been many highs, lows, sad times and some very happy times for June and myself as we tried to work through many distressing times in her life.

Due to a crisis and a number of devastating events in June's life I came into her life to become her Citizen Advocate. We initially had to attend many court appearances and engage with a variety of government departments. What I quickly came to realise is how most people we needed to deal with had no knowledge or understanding of how a person with an intellectual disability sees and views the world.

June was in a highly vulnerable place, she was confused with what was taking place in her life, had very little confidence or self-esteem, was scared, 'terrified actually' and had no understanding of what was happening, had no voice, and/or supports at all. Most of these departments not only did not listen to June. They had little or no compassion or empathy for her or her situation.

This led to us seeking legal advice. We were successful in securing a legal team (pro bono). They were the most amazing group of people that we got to know extremely well over the first few years.

I found that many of the parties we dealt with, in time, started to show June and myself some respect for what we were trying to achieve. However, this was the total opposite of what June was receiving in the first instance. It was vastly important that I was in June's life to become her spokesperson and to fight and defend her rights and importantly to have her voice listened to.

Over the years and basically having to educate the people we dealt with, we did see change in those people. They began to understand more of June and how she viewed and understood the world. This was a great help when ideas of support were being put in place.

June was struggling with many legal but also heart breaking issues and as I was getting to know her well I realised that she needed some type of diversion from her life of turmoil. I started to take her to the library to teach her how to use a computer, send emails etc. June loved this and it brought her pleasure. It was also a great distraction for her from all the struggles

and loneliness she was dealing with. June later purchased a computer and the lessons continued in her home.

Sixteen and a half years later we are still friends. I still need to connect with various Government agencies and groups on her behalf, however they are all very helpful in providing positive outcomes.

Only recently it was highlighted the significance of our long term relationship when another 'new staff member' contacted me and was so happy that I could assist her with bygone events that have shaped the present. This enabled her to support June more appropriately without the need to drag up very sad recollections from June.

It is wonderful to see how June has connected with family members and has built strong relationships with her peers. What she can do on a computer these days is amazing to see. She is active in social media and has made many connections.

Today she is confident, has a healthy self-esteem and is enjoying life.

"We will be friends for many more years to come"

friendship
is not a big
thing...it's a million
little things

Love and Loyalty Jodie and Olive

Olive Street was employed by the Citizen Advocacy program in the early days of the program as an Administrative Assistant. She had great organisational skills and her presence meant that Bob Lee, the Coordinator, was able to focus full time on the key activities of doing Citizen Advocacy. Many people involved in the program will remember Olive's cheerful personality and willingness to do everything she could to assist the work of citizen advocacy on the Sunshine Coast.

Olive came to the program with a commitment and dedication to two things, her family, and her involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. As she became personally involved in her work, she enthusiastically added Citizen Advocacy to that short list. Like many of us, Olive understood that Citizen Advocacy was a movement, not just a job. She valued and respected the freely given commitments made by Citizen Advocates, and was always prepared to draw on her impressive experience, knowledge, and network of friends to assist Advocates to support Protégés.

When Olive left her work at the program, she welcomed the opportunity to be matched as a Citizen Advocate for Jodie who she had known since Jodie's childhood. Olive was a formidable advocate for Jodie, and was always an example for others who want to make the lives of people with disability better, safer and more secure. Jodie and Olive became lifelong friends, and as Olive became ill, Jodie willingly returned the love and loyalty that she had received from Olive.

Olive was recognised for her dedication to the program by being awarded Life Membership of Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy.

Olive passed away in June after a long illness and is survived by her devoted husband, and great friend of Citizen Advocacy, Jim Street and their beloved family.

Olive made a wonderful contribution to the work of Citizen Advocacy on the Sunshine Coast and will be greatly missed by those who knew her.



Another chapter in Citizen Advocacy. Advocate meets Protégé. Nathan and James

Each of us are drawn to certain involvements. One can never know how those involvements will evolve and unfold. All any of us can do is do our level best with our commitments. That is how I was attracted to Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy. I was driven by a sense of injustice. And I was searching for some practical way to involve myself to tackle this perennial societal problem. Many times, I had driven by the office where Citizen Advocacy is located in Maroochydore. Somehow, intuitively, I felt drawn to walk in and find out more about the organisation. After a brief conversation with the co-ordinator I knew working as an advocate was what I wanted to become involved with. I found home. That was in February 2019. I believe history is important. Both personal and collective. For one without the other cannot exist. As my co-ordinator shared my protégé's personal, family, social and institution history with me, not having met Nathan yet, I immediately said to her "you have made the perfect match." Of course, we only had some details. We would have to work hard to establish more relevant details about Nathan's personal history. That was because of a lack of co-operation from his aged care operators, as well as others. For when we do not have enough personal history about a vulnerable person, it is more difficult to keep them well and safe. Being unseen by the wider community or being in a family or institutional setting that normalises neglect, abuse, indifference to suffering and wrongdoing, is in fact how vulnerable individuals are dehumanised, controlled, exploited, denied their human rights and otherwise harmed. Being known, seen, heard and valued in our communities equates to being safer. In Nathan's situation, neglect had become normalised. Perhaps even past abuse.

One can never be fully prepared for advocate and protégés first meeting. That was true for me. When my co-ordinator first introduced me to Nathan, back in March 2019, he was sitting restrained in his wheelchair, in a locked dementia ward in an aged care facility. Our eyes met in a long meaningful exchange. I will never forget that moment. Destiny had arrived. I must be honest, I had to fight off my natural impulse to jump the fence and run away from what I had encountered. At first, through



the eyes of my co-ordinator, then independently through my own conscience, I immediately apprehended why Nathan should never have been left in those horrible conditions. Where he had lived up until that point for 24 years. I left that day having determined to change his life and give him the life he deserved. And I would do whatever that took to make it happen with the full support of Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy.

The co-ordinator and I sat down and discussed how best to work on getting Nathan out of aged care. He was only 22 years old when he arrived there. Having left the notorious Basil Stafford institution in Brisbane beforehand, which he had been placed in during the first few years of his life. The co-ordinator provided support and learning opportunities to develop my advocacy knowledge, skills and confidence.

And she shared stories, inspiring stories about successful protégé outcomes and offered me continuous encouragement, all of which would be needed to get Nathan out of aged care and into supported community living. That required gaining co-operation from others that wanted to maintain the status quo.

Visiting Nathan regularly and building up a personal friendship while talking to his carers was an essential part of build rapport and trust. From the start, I wanted to gently point out to staff, management, services and family that Nathan's situation was not working in his best interests. There was some resistance by people, his parents included. What greatly helped to turn everyone around was the respectful process we followed. Which began with being invited to provide anonymous information to the Royal Commission into aged care. Our involvement focused on providing evidence of conditions that younger people like Nathan are experiencing in aged care. Then we worked to secure a suitable NDIS package for Nathan that would support community living. Followed by going to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to gain formal guardianship through the appointment of the Office of Public Guardian to assist with Nathan's transition out of aged care. I then appointed the best support co-ordination provider I could find. Then went about appointing the best supported community housing provider I could find. Followed by selecting all Nathan's allied health practitioners. And maintaining and adding new medical support staff determined that he only has the best people in his team. And now with this integrated team approach we provide constant monitoring and facilitation of all the above through meetings and reviews, which of course is ongoing.

The above process took over 1 year to prepare Nathan for moving out of aged care. Then in May of 2020, Nathan's Occupational Therapist (OT) and I met Nathan at his aged care home. Staff on duty said their farewells and some became quite emotional. Nathan arrived at his new home and got out of his wheelchair walking into his own place. He was visibly excited.

as was his OT and community housing owner and staff. Nathan has since settled into his new home and is thriving on all levels of his life.

Over the last 6 months after moving Nathan out of aged care he celebrated his 48th birthday. Since then he has become a visible and valued member of our community. He smiles more. He is free to move whenever he wishes to. He eats when he is hungry and enjoys delicious and nutritious food. He rests when he needs too. He has made new friends. He interacts with his neighbour's and their pets. He goes to the barber. He goes to the beach. He does to the gardens. He goes to the pub where they give him free mocktails! And a new house mate has arrived for him to make friends with. His life has transformed into a joyful one. He no longer feels bored and lonely. Now his days are filled with loving attention and caring responsive people. People love Nathan. He has a way of bringing the best out of them. Because he loves them unconditionally. He is a gentle man with a cheeky sense of fun.

On his birthday, I was heading into visit my daughter in Brisbane. Before leaving I planned to drop into Nathan's place and sing happy birthday and give him his presents and card. I was hoping his mum and dad would be there too. They were there when I arrived. Nathan was enjoying all the attention. The house felt like a home. Nathan's life had come a long way since leaving aged care. And so, had he. Nathan was eating cake with his parents. I was talking with Nathan's mum and dad. Then I asked his mum "how do you feel about Nathan's life now?" she responded "that her hesitations" were no longer a concern. That for me was a significant moment. This time in Nathan's presence.

Our friendship had eliminated doubts and concerns Nathan's mum and dad initially held over moving him out of aged care. Sometimes people can see what others cannot until they can as well. **Advocates and protégés have a way of showing others how lives can be made better in significant ways.** That is the work of advocacy.

Later, while driving towards Brisbane, tears of joy flowed freely down my cheeks as I knew Nathan's and my determination to get him out of aged care and into his new life was the right decision. Because it is obvious to anyone that Nathan is significantly better off now. The power of a advocates freely given friendship, that is fiercely independent, even of the agency it works with when required, that is based on lifelong loyalty to a vulnerable person and, that is able to withstand all obstacles and challenges in relation to protecting their protégés best interests and wellbeing from being realised - defines citizen advocacy.

I look forward to the days ahead that Nathan and I have as friends.

Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

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is funded by the Department
of Social Services

The program operates in and
around Maroochydore,
Nambour, Caloundra,
Mooloolaba, Buderim,
Coolum, Noosa and the
Hinterland areas.

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