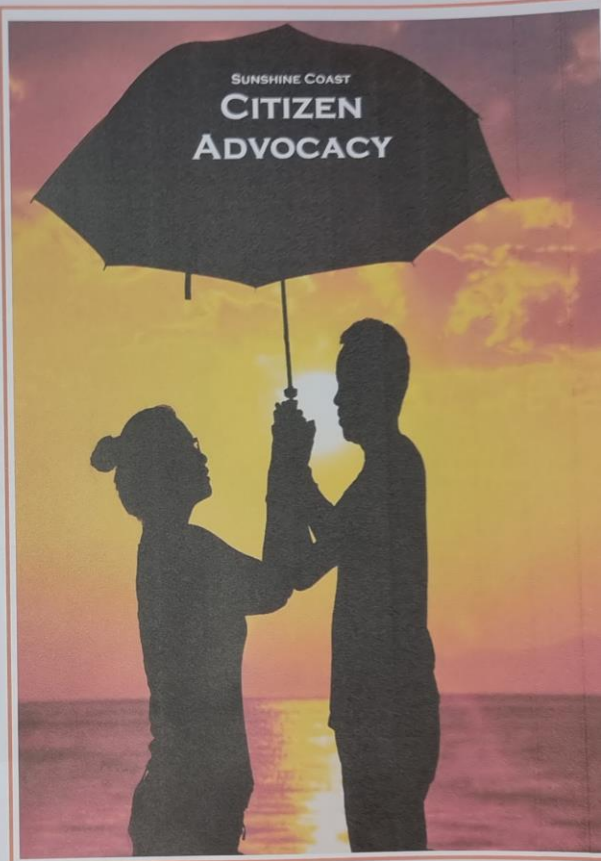


The 'true' measure of the justice of a system  
is the amount of protection it guarantees  
to the weakest.

Aung San Suu Kyi

November 2022



One of the greatest gifts anyone could  
give another person  
is to....

**Have true belief in them**



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## Why Is Citizen Advocacy Important?

Let's face it, we live in a world that is oppressive to people that doesn't fit our image of health, wealth and brains. Many people prefer to think of the world as a kind, welcoming place, and if only we could fix things, it would be a great world for everybody. Well, there's been centuries of fixing up and we have just as much oppression, poverty, prejudice and hatred in the world as we ever had.

The question, then, is not a matter of fixing things up, but is a moral choice of where each person stands in the face of dynamics that oppress and even destroy vulnerable people. Fortunately, there are people who will stand in the face of oppression, and will do the right thing in standing by, for, and with oppressed people.

Citizen Advocacy provides very real opportunities for individuals to act upon that moral choice. Moral simply means having the ability to tell right from wrong. It is wrong to treat anyone as less than oneself. It is right to regard all people as of equal value and worth, and to act upon that belief by defending the life of a vulnerable person.

## What does an advocate do?

With coordinator support, the advocates take on many different roles and, with the help of their own networks, they have helped people with intellectual disability to find places to live, jobs, medical and financial representation, transportation to jobs, appointments, community involvement and to have one person in their life that is not paid to be there.

Advocates have intervened successfully with hospitals, landlords, employers, teachers, and social workers on behalf of their protege. This at times comes at significant emotional, time and financial cost to the advocate.

Often advocates also build strong personal friendships with the person they are advocating for, as well as introducing them to social and family life, sometimes for the very first time!

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## There is hopefulness on the horizon

From the Chair of The Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia (John Armstrong), Information of the trust—see page 3!

Australia has been spared so much hardship compared to other countries, but what lies ahead? So while we remain hopeful there is also much vigilance needed. What kind of things can possibly go wrong for a person with a disability? After all, the NDIS is there to meet every need, but of course systems have and likely will always respond to people's individual needs with system wide approaches—rhetoric to the contrary.

Much support within human services tends to be standardised against inflexible rules and policies rather than customised and made relevant for each person. Even the response of a citizen advocate is going to be uniquely different in each relationship. No two are alike. Who the protégé is and what issues exist in their life will be their own, though many experiences may still follow broad patterns associated with how all people are treated when they are regarded as having low or no value. Never-the-less, the advocate is having to understand what has taken place in someone's life and what impact those things have had. For instance, has the protégé been cast into a negative role throughout their life, perhaps the role of eternal child, such that they are most at ease with low or no expectations being placed upon them? How might the advocate introduce the expectations of adulthood to this person? Well, in a highly individualised way that makes sense for the protégé and their relationship together. Treating a person as an individual transmits worth, value and in some contexts, affection.

Being treated the same as everyone else is what we reserve for devalued people. Within systems, privacy and confidentiality has become a means to disguise several things: How the system actually treats people, the ability to withhold

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knowledge about people even to those who have a need to know. The pretense of individuality. Anonymity has never conferred dignity; only personal knowledge and respect can do that.

John Armstrong - The Newsletter of the Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia

## The Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia

Imagine a life over which you have little control. You have no say in where you live, with whom you live, and what you do each day.

Imagine a life in which most of the people are paid to be there. The time they spend with you is a financial transaction, punctuated by the clock on-clock off routine of their work schedule.

Imagine a life in which the risk of abuse and neglect is heightened and constant. Your safety is always in jeopardy because no one has your back.

How would that life feel?

This is the lived reality of many people with an intellectual disability. But it doesn't have to be that way. The Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia invites you to imagine a different life for people with an intellectual disability. Imagine a different life, because someone is prepared to step in and level the unlevel playing field.

The vision of the Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia is based on its belief that supportive, long-lasting relationships for people with an intellectual disability offer the best opportunity for a positive future. It's a vision with an unshakable faith in the power of committed relationships, through which lives can be touched and changed—one person at a time.

You can help change the game for people with an intellectual

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disability. A sliding-doors moment lies ahead. Become invested in the future of people with an intellectual disability by supporting the Citizen Advocacy Trust. It's an investment that will pay real dividends. It's an investment that will change the course and fate of someone's life. Join us in making it happen.

## Contact details

PO Box 228  
Clifton Hill, VIC  
Australia 3068  
ACN 114 532 839

Phone: +61 400 924 130

Email: [webcontact@citizenadvocacytrust.com.au](mailto:webcontact@citizenadvocacytrust.com.au)

**"All disadvantaged groups  
need advocacy**

**Privileged groups get it without looking!"**

[citizenadvocacytrust.com.au](http://citizenadvocacytrust.com.au)

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## Freedom and Responsibility: Why Advocate Independence is Crucial in Citizen Advocacy

Citizen Advocacy relies on the watchfulness of individual citizens who will promote justice for vulnerable people. To be truly watchful and vigilant, citizen advocates must be independent. Citizen Advocacy puts its trust in competent, valued, independent citizens who are not afraid to speak up and be heard.

People with disabilities and other devalued people often have a variety of people and organisations that exert great influence over their lives, such as family members, service providers, or even friends. The reason why advocate independence is so important is that there are always some competing interests in any given situation.

A conflict of interest does not necessarily mean that one person's interests are valid and another person's interest invalid, or that one person is good and the other bad. Two parties may both have legitimate interests that compete with one another. For example, a residential service provider has an interest in providing a service at a reasonable cost so as to stay within an agency budget, and yet one or several of its residents may need extra support beyond what the agency can afford. Another example is that agencies have an interest in protecting their reputations, so incidents of abuse or neglect by a service-providing agency might not receive public attention.

Advocates need to be aware of such conflicts, and promote the interests of the protégé when those interests are at risk of being compromised. It is therefore important that advocates be independent of the agencies and service providers who have controlling interests in the lives of protégés. Another feature of advocate independence is that advocates are independent of the protégé's family and friends. This kind of independence sounds counterintuitive, as the province of

family responsibility towards vulnerable family members is

almost sacred ground. However, not all families in all circumstances or at all times act in the best interests of a vulnerable family member.

Being independent of the interests of a protégé's family (or of a service provider) does not necessarily mean that an advocate has to have an adversarial relationship with them. When a family does have the best interests of its family member at heart, an advocate can represent the interests of his protégé in ways that help the protégé's perspective to be seen and heard. Sometimes it takes an "outsider" to help the family see the protégé's point of view. This does not necessarily mean that a family is ill-intentioned; For example, a family member may be exhausted from keeping vigil at a hospital or nursing home and needs to get some rest — which competes with the protégé's need for someone at the bedside.

A more worrisome example is when a distraught family member of someone with complex medical needs might regard the person who is suffering as "better off dead." A family member may even say something to that effect, although the words uttered in such situations are rarely so stark. One may instead hear phrases like "low quality of life" or "she would not have wanted to live this way." In our present medical culture, such words are sometimes used to justify inappropriately withholding or withdrawing needed treatment or even food and water.

Most conflicts of interests in families are not so dramatic, and may involve what freedoms a person is allowed, or how someone's money is handled, planning (or lack of it) for the future, and other concerns that fall within the domain of family life. A word of caution: families have always been — and for most people will continue to be — a primary source of support. A relevant advocate needs to tread lightly before interfering in a family's business, but there are times when someone outside the family needs to raise a voice on a person's behalf. Ideally, this is done by someone who has standing in a person's ...

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life — an advocate whose relationship is tried and true.

The independence of advocates means that advocates have the freedom, and the responsibility, to decide whether or not to become an advocate, what they will do, and when they will do it. However, advocate independence does not mean that advocates are left on their own without support.

Citizen advocates should be able to rely on competent, knowledgeable advice from their local Citizen Advocacy office, and at the same time be free to make their own judgments.

From: Hildebrand, A.J. (2004). *One Person at a Time: Citizen Advocacy for People with Disabilities*. Brookline Books, MA. Adam (A.J.) Hildebrand was a Citizen Advocacy co-ordinator and editor of the Citizen Advocacy Forum.

### Core belief of Citizen Advocacy:

**It is incorrect to assume that people with disability have their needs adequately met by the human service system.**

**People with disability should be part of the community and live as independently as possible.**

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## Sunshine Coast

### Accessible beach program

Council is working with local Surf Life Saving Clubs and the Compass Institute to make Sunshine Coast beaches more accessible and inclusive. Beach matting, wheelchairs and life jackets are available to use at no charge. The beach equipment is suitable for both adults and children.

### Beach equipment available at Surf Life Saving Clubs

Beach equipment is available during patrolled hours, on weekends and public holidays from September through until May each year.

Bookings to use the equipment can be made with club volunteer lifesavers.

When making bookings, please understand the role of volunteer surf lifesaving clubs is to patrol the beaches and the clubs may not have administrative staff available to take your booking call.

If you are unable to make contact ahead of your visit, please talk with volunteers upon arrival at the beach. If available for use, the beach wheelchair and the matting can be rolled out for you.

Volunteer lifesavers may not have the capacity to assist people onto the beach and it is the responsibility of the user to ensure they have the necessary assistance to use the beach wheelchair and the beach matting.

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Location	Equipment	Time week-ends & public holidays	Contact
<a href="#">Alexandra Headland Surf Lifesaving Club</a> 167 Alexandra Parade Alexandra Headland	Beach wheelchair and Beach matting	7am-5pm  Temporarily suspended	5443 6677
<a href="#">Coolum Beach Surf Life Saving Club</a> 1775-1779 David Low Way Coolum Beach	Beach wheelchair And Matting	7am-5pm	5446 1148
<a href="#">Metropolitan Caloundra Surf Life Saving Club</a> 1 Spender Lane Kinos Beach	Beach wheelchair And Matting	7am-5pm	5491 1081
<a href="#">Coolum Beach Surf Life Saving Club</a> 1775-1779 David Low Way Coolum Beach	Beach wheelchair And Matting	7am-5pm	5446 1148

<a href="#">Mooloolaba Surf Lifesaving Club</a> The Esplanade Mooloolaba	Beach wheelchair And matting	7am-5pm  24 hours / 7 days a week	5452 3711
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#### Beach wheelchair is available from Compass Institute

A beach wheelchair that can traverse the sand without the need for beach matting is available for hire from the [Compass Institute Inc](#) facility in Caloundra. This service is available all year round except for public holidays.

You will need to complete a Hire Agreement and pay a refundable deposit of \$20 per day.

Bookings can be made directly with Compass Institute from Monday to Friday between 9:00am and 3:30pm. For more information phone (07) 5438 2627

#### RECHARGE Scheme

The RECHARGE Scheme supports people who use electric mobility scooters or wheelchairs. The scheme includes locations to safely recharge scooters or wheelchair batteries free of charge. The Sunshine Coast has five locations.

TAFE Queensland East Coast Region - 34 Lady Musgrave Drive Mountain Creek

Walk on Wheels Nambour - 26 Ann Street Nambour

Walk on Wheels Kawana - 11/10 Capital Place Birtinya

Kawana Shopping world - 119 Point Cartwright Drive, Buddina

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RECHARGE Scheme Australia has up-to-date information on all locations of the RECHARGE Scheme™. If your group or business would like to discuss how to get involved by offering a RECHARGE Scheme™ on the Sunshine Coast, please email [commdevelopment@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:commdevelopment@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au) or phone (07) 5441 8261.

**Nambour Community Centre**  
**COMMUNITY LUNCH**  
Every Thursday 12.00 noon

COME ALONG FOR A TUMMY FILLING.  
FRESHLY COOKED LUNCH  
EVERYONE IS WELCOME  
MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND CONNECT WITH OLD ONES  
BRING A NEIGHBOUR OR INVITE A STRANGER  
(GOLD COIN DONATION IF YOU CAN)  
DINE IN OR TAKE AWAY OPTIONS

1st Thursday of the month - Anrita Mothers Kitchen  
3rd Thursday of the month - Thai Community Group  
Every other Thursday - NCC Volunteer Crew

Takeaway meals supplied by Sundale Aged Care

Nambour Community Centre  
2 Shearer St, Nambour  
Email: [reception@nambourcc.org](mailto:reception@nambourcc.org)  
Phone: 5461 4724

This community project is supported by our friends at:  
SUNDAY STARBUCKS  
MILKMAID  
DUNLOP  
OZ HARVEST

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#### But What If...

- "Mummy, will I fall through the cracks?"
- "Oh no Ricky dear, mummy and daddy will look after you"
- "Where will I live when I am old Mummy"
- "You will live with your family Ricky dear"
- "Will you be my family then?"
- "No Ricky dear, we will be gone to heaven."
- "But where will my house be?"
- "It will be wherever you want it to be Rick"
- "Mummy and daddy wont be here, but we will leave you well provided for."
- "Who will look after my house Mummy?"
- "You will Richard!"
- "But mummy, but mummy, what if I am alone and I can't look after my house?"
- "Then you will have enough money to live in a big house with other people and your money will pay the cost of looking after the house."
- "Will the people look after me as well Mummy?"
- "No Richard you will be big, and you will be able to look after yourself."
- "But....what if....what if I fall through the cracks?"

Transforming vulnerable lives Citizen Advocacy, South Australia Inc

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**Friends of Citizen Advocacy!**  
**You're invited to join**  
**Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy**

for our  
**Christmas Party &**  
**30th Annual General Meeting**

**Venue: Woombye Bowls Club,**  
**5-9 Hill Street, Woombye**

**Date: Sunday 11th December 2022**  
**Time: 11a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

RSVP by Friday 25th November 2022  
 E: donna.duncan@citizenadvocacy.com or text/phone  
 Donna on 0418714695

(Please include all names, and any special dietary requirements)

Note: Drinks are available for purchase at the bar!

**community where we feel we truly belong.**

We all have a longing for a community where we feel we truly belong. If you've ever moved into a new location, I have found it can take 18 months to 2 years before you feel a sense of confidence in being in your new home. You get to know neighbours and shop keepers, you might have joined a club, interest, or sporting group. You come to know how things are done in your community.

Being known by others and being able to contribute to the interests of a wider community seems one of the most satisfying things to experience in this life. It provides a sense of purpose, but clearly it also benefits other people. It really is more blessed to give than to receive. Something approaching reciprocity occurs. We are willing to make sacrifices, while others sacrifice or give something back to us.

We each get to express our talent and interest and quite often we are willing to even take up roles that simply involve a job that must be done. (Have you noticed how few hands go up when its time to nominate for treasurer!)

But there are other forces at work in our community; forces that tend to break up and separate people from each other. Wolfensberger referred to these forces as a process of "De-Communitization". That is, things that are happening to isolate and separate community member's from each other; to extinguish the ties that bind the very fabric of a community. How can this occur? One principal way is the culturally facilitated focus of citizens upon themselves; their feelings, desires and "rights". 'Me' and 'My' rather than 'We' and 'Us' as a culture.

This can have the tendency to pit people against each other. Another feature is to live in the moment; "here & nowism", so that we insist on instant on instant gratification without regard for its future consequences. Of course, much of the culture

directs us to embrace a life of pleasure, rather than the good things of life.

Pleasure might be seen as something one is entitled to, whereas the good things of life are something one has to put out effort for. Yet most of us yearn for a decent community and seek ways of serving and supporting many community efforts, contribution to the lives of others being one of the key aspects of the good things of life. While citizen advocacy isn't primarily focused on community development, it is one of the secondary outcomes of its efforts.

Citizen Advocacy successfully brings previously unknown people into long-term committed relationships. It stands in contradiction to these isolating and destructive forces, especially those that would prefer to see certain unwanted groups removed from our presence.

*John Armstrong - The Newsletter of the Citizen Advocacy Trust of Australia - June 2021*



**A person's most beautiful asset**  
 is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others.

**Ways to be involved!**

In today's society, it is commonly assumed that paid professionals are needed to address people's needs. Citizen Advocacy asks ordinary citizens to become involved in the lives of people with intellectual disability. Many people possess a variety of talents through their experience in family, work, church and community associations and it is this experience which often makes a real difference in the life of a person with disability. Citizen Advocacy is not a service. Rather, it is an invitation to people leading full lives in our communities to get to know people who have intellectual disability who have been or who are at risk of being excluded from their community.

**Be an advocate**

Advocates are all ages and come from a variety of backgrounds. Most citizen advocates have had no significant involvement with people with disability before. An advocate is individually matched to a protégé on the basis of the advocate's preferences, personal characteristics and commitment. Advocates are given an orientation to the common life experiences of people with intellectual disability, advocacy principles and the specific needs of the person they will be advocating for.

**Be a crisis advocate** - assisting, on a time-limited basis, with a specific problem or crisis as it arises in an emergency and/or critical situation.

**Be an advocate associate**

Advocate associates voluntarily assist advocates by providing information or expertise in their field. Some examples of areas of experience or expertise are: Health (nurse, social worker), Law, negotiation, finance.

**Be a supporter**

You can be part of the community network through which potential advocates could be identified and recruited.

**You may be only one person in the world, but you may also be the world to one person!**

### I have a name

My friend and I often go out for coffee or lunch and shop for clothes. At first this was scary because I did not get to do this very often and I can't talk like most people.

As we pass people, I like to say hello by touching their arm. For people who don't know me, that might worry them, so my friend help by telling people what I am doing and why. This works really well because I am meeting lots of people and more of them respond by saying "hello Deb" back.

We go to the same shops and now people say "Hello Deb! Nice to see you!" Instead of either not talking to me, ignoring me, or worst of all, talking at me like I'm only five years old.

That might seem like such a small and silly thing to you, but it means so more to me than I can ever say.

Transforming vulnerable lives  
Citizen Advocacy, South Australia Inc

We rise by helping others

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### No one person can change the world, but you as a Citizen Advocate can change the world for one person

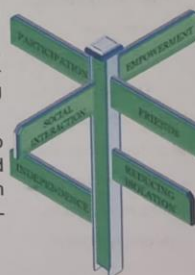
Citizen Advocacy is a program that promotes, protects and defends the rights of people who have an intellectual disability. Citizen Advocacy supports a voluntary group of individuals (Citizen Advocates) to offer protection, guidance and friendship to people of all ages who are lonely and at risk.

Citizen Advocacy looks for ordinary people in the community who care about others, to offer their time freely to stand by a person with a disability and be there for them. People can either be asked by the program or can step forward of their own accord, and are matched with a person with a disability based on a good 'fit' between their needs and interests and the ability's, skills and commitment of the potential Citizen Advocate.

As a Citizen Advocate there are a number of roles such as being a mentor, adviser, protector, guardian, teacher or just a good friend. Citizen Advocates can spend time with someone to ensure that they are not left lonely and isolated and may be supported to participate and do activities of their choice. One example would be to assist a young boy to go to football training assisting him with emotional and practical support giving confidence and advice.

Being a Citizen Advocate can help build many skills including: communication skills, helping a person make decisions, listening skills, supportive skills, relationship building skills and problem solving skills.

Citizen Advocates may also develop more confidence, self esteem, build friendships and feel comfortable with people that have varying abilities and disabilities.



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### Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

Sunshine Coast Citizen  
Advocacy  
Is funded by the Department  
of Social Services

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

**Office Address**  
Unit 6/36 Maud Street  
Maroochydore

Program Coordinator  
mobile:  
0418 714 695  
Donna.duncon  
@citizenadvocacy.com  
les@citizenadvocacy.com

**Office Hours :**  
8.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m.  
(Monday-Friday)

#### Board Members:

- President  
Craig Agnew

- Vice President  
Ronda Quin

- Treasurer  
Vanessa Drewery

- Ordinary members  
Andrew Barton

#### Program Staff:

- Program Coordinators  
Donna Duncan  
Les Pearce

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We can't help  
everyone, but  
everyone can help  
someone.  
- Ronald Reagan

