



# **Citizen Advocacy Sunbury & Districts Inc.**

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## **Submission to the Review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework June 2015**

Citizen advocacy is a community based movement which aims to recognise, promote and defend the rights and interests of people with an intellectual disability.

It does so by finding and supporting caring, responsible citizens who are prepared to act voluntarily to provide individual advocacy to a person with an intellectual disability who may be lonely, face difficult challenges, or be in a risky situation

Citizen Advocacy Sunbury & Districts Inc. is an independent, local, community organisation guided and managed by a group of active local citizens, who are motivated by the principles and practices of citizen advocacy, and has a strong human rights and social justice approach to proactively manifesting justice and inclusion for very vulnerable people with an intellectual disability who may not have the support or spokespersonship of family or a social network due to the impact of their disability and societal prejudices.

The CAD&D program is funded under the NDAP and employs a small professional staff whose role it is to create and support unpaid individual advocacy relationships through the citizen advocacy model.

CAS&D believes that the citizen advocacy model of individual advocacy should be safeguarded within the NDAF, promoted and supported to develop because it offers many advantages to people with a disability and positive effects the wellbeing of wider community through engaging volunteers and promoting social justice and inclusion for all.

CAS& D believes that the National Disability Advocacy Framework should recognise the following

1. Citizen Advocates are **INDEPENDENT** and truly free of conflict of interest as there is no monetary motivation or reward for their activity
2. Citizen advocacy is **SUSTAINABLE AND OFFERS STABILITY** because the majority of citizen advocacy relationships are life long and remain intact through lifestyle changes for both the advocate and the individual they are supporting. The advocacy relationship develops into a bond of friendship for both people.
3. Citizen advocacy is highly effective in achieving social/community **INCLUSION** for the individual and influencing how the community views people with a disability through conferring a valued status on the individual through modeling a positive relationship with a person with a disability and the confidence it gives the individual to engage in community participation by having the secure support of their advocate, mentor and friend. (social role valorisation theory)



4. Citizen advocacy provide **EXCELLENT VALUE FOR MONEY** to the public purse as CA programs always focus on lifelong support needs. This improves long-term outcomes and achieves ongoing savings on future support costs. People with an intellectual disability who are typically supported by a citizen advocate, efficiently and appropriately access services. This support from advocates prevents minor social, emotional and physical disorders from escalating to become acute crisis, thus demanding more expensive remedial responses and achieving a better outcomes for the individual.
5. Citizen Advocacy program have demonstrated very **HIGH STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND MANAGEMENT** through the Quality Assurance Surveillance Audit (Standards)
6. CAS&D believes that the **NDAF SHOULD RECOGNISE AND SAFE GUARD THE NEED FOR CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAMS TO CONTINUE TO BE BLOCK FUNDED.** Funding to CA programs is used to cover fixed costs such as staff salaries and office running costs which cannot be directly connected to achieving specific outcomes for individuals with a disability. The work involved to establish and support a CA relationship will vary considerably from individual to individual as their needs and the outcomes achieved are so diverse, ranging from people with acute needs and significant intellectual and physical disabilities to people with disabilities that have needs that are largely social which can be supported by a loyal friend. The type of relationship/match that is thus created does not lend itself to a fee for service “market economy” funding model. There is no clear means by which NDIS funding could flow into the CAS&D program.
7. CAS&D strongly contend that advocacy should be funded independently of the NDIS because **A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY WHO WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR A “PACKAGE” UNDER THE NDIS WILL NEED ADVOCACY.**
8. Advocacy must remain independent of disability services provision in order to avoid conflicts of interest. A person paid by a service provider should not therefore act in the capacity of an advocate. CAS&D believes **IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL’S KEY WORKER OR A SUPPORT PERSON FROM A SERVICE PROVIDER TO BE THEIR ADVOCATE IN THE PLANNING MEETING DUE TO A PERCEIVED OR ACTUAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST.**
9. CAS&D believe that **THE CURRENT PRINCIPLES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS ARE STILL AS RELEVANT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY** as they were prior to the introduction of the NDIS and believe there should be **GREATER CLARITY AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES “INDEPENDENT” ADVOCACY ALONG WITH A DEFINITION OF “FREE FROM CONFLICT OF INTEREST”.**

*Submitted by: Bridie Smith, Chairperson*

