



## **Review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF)**

***Submission from DACSSA***

***470 Marion Road, Plympton Park SA 5038***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for the Review of the NDAF.

DACSSA Inc provides Individual Advocacy (95%) and Systemic Advocacy (5%) and is funded as an NDAP agency by DSS. It receives no State Government funding, and in fact there has been no input of funding for disability advocacy from the State Government for a number of years. DACSSA provides support, information and advocacy for all people with disability, their families, friends and carers.

### **1. Do you believe the current Framework encompasses your vision of advocacy in the NDIS environment? If not, what changes are required?**

- The Framework could be strengthened by a stronger focus on how and when people with disability are supported by disability advocacy to participate in decisions that affect their lives – this is in line with partnership focus within the National Disability Strategy (NDS) and National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).
- If the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is to be truly *person centered*, people with disability will require the choice of an independent advocate to ensure the process is both effective and enabling at every stage. The availability of advocacy for all people with disability should be enshrined within the scope of the NDIS with access not being dependent on a person's ability to have it funded as part of their package of support.
- The definition of advocacy in the Discussion Paper on page 2 does not accurately represent current disability advocacy provision – e.g. advocacy does not support people to find employment and training.
- The NDS (page 17) provides a still useful overview on advocacy which includes a focus on rights, as well as decision making.

*'Disability advocacy enables and supports people with disability to safeguard their rights and overcome barriers that impact on their ability to participate in the community. Advocacy supports people to make sure that their rights are promoted and valued, to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, especially around access to services and support, and to be actively involved in the life of their communities. Disability advocacy enables people with*

*disability to actively participate in the decision-making processes that safeguard and advance their human rights, wellbeing and interests'.*

- DACSSA is of the view that both individual and systemic advocacy need to cohesively and collaboratively work together to fulfill the vision of advocacy.
- DACSSA is currently being approached by families of children with disability about issues specific to the NDIS. This demand for support will increase as the scheme becomes fully implemented in SA from 2016. Disability advocacy agencies are ideally placed to support people to understand their rights within the NDIS environment, goal setting, choices, how to navigate service systems, complaints mechanisms etc. Much of this could take place prior to the first meeting with the NDIA planner which would promote a much more streamlined and positive outcome for all stakeholders.
- Disability advocacy could assume a greater role in developing the individual capacity of people with disability and/or families so that they develop and are skilled in advocating for themselves (self-advocacy).
- An updated and contemporary vision of advocacy is required with an emphasis on how advocacy agencies can empower and support people to make informed decisions, ensure their human rights, and be part of an inclusive and equitable Australian society.

## **2. Are the principles of the Framework appropriate for guiding the delivery of advocacy for people with disability in a changing disability environment, including in the context of the NDIA? If not what changes are required?**

- In respect to capacity building, this could include community capacity building the need to raise community member's knowledge, awareness and skills to use their capacity. Advocacy could play a powerful role in community development, building social capital, community education etc.
- In line with the spirit of NDIS, we recommend there should be an overarching principle around the person - centered and individualised approach to advocacy.
- The final dot point Principle could also refer to the importance of collaboration (in addition to strategic alliances) not only between organisations within state boundaries but the importance of exploring intra-jurisdictional partnership and alliances? It may well, or could help in establishing across border solutions for the needs of communities.

### **3. Are the outcomes of the Framework still relevant or should different ones be included? If so, what should be included?**

- Outcomes (and outputs) should be reviewed to ensure they are measurable, and can be effectively reported upon and analysed. Meaningful uniform qualitative and quantitative data will be a valuable tool for effective individual and systemic advocacy.
- Improved efficiencies across the Advocacy sector to promote accountability, sustainability and cost effectiveness.
- The outcomes on choice and decision making could be reviewed to have a stronger focus on how this is targeted towards the NDIS environment.

### **4. Are the outputs of the Framework still relevant or should different outputs be included? If so, what should be included?**

- DACSSA is of the view that the achievement of outcomes/outputs need to be linked to adequate levels of funding, and that demand for advocacy will increase dramatically as the NDIS is formally implemented. Clearly there is a need to ensure that the National Disability Strategy recommendation, which noted that there is “provision of funding increases to advocacy agencies to participate in monitoring and evaluation of the strategy”, is acknowledged and supported.
- Consistent with the themes underlying the NDS and NSDS, a greater focus on continuous improvement is required to reflect a more professional, accountable, sustainable and contemporary advocacy sector.
- Outputs need to reflect outcomes, and if outcomes are amended to be more NDIS specific then corresponding outputs should be provided, e.g. disability advocacy that supports NDIS participants at all stages of the NDIS process, including provision of information about rights, choices, service options”, plus a specific output on individual capacity building/self-advocacy would be useful.

### **5. Does the Framework identify what is needed in the current and future disability environment? If not, what changes are required?**

- Need to articulate a revised vision for advocacy, and then review/develop principles, outcomes, and outputs. Refer to suggestions above.
- DACSSA is of the opinion that the Framework will require a continuous quality improvement focus.