MACKAY ADVOCACY INC

The number of people who were supported with Individual Advocacy for the year 2014/2015 came to a total of 65 with a total of 99 issues and we also provided information and referral to 32 people (either not eligible for advocacy or just seeking one of assistance) who contacted the service whether it be by telephone or in person. There has been a significant increase in referrals and of serious matters in the Bowen, Whitsunday, Sarina and Hinterland regions. This can be attributed to continued promotion of Mackay Advocacy Inc and an increased presence of the Outreach Advocate in those regions. Many referrals are from the same agencies repeatedly as they are confident that we can competently assist and collaborate towards positive outcomes and resolution for all parties involved.

At the end of the financial year, the database statistics are collated to create the charts found on the following pages.

Please note that there is **no individual identifying information** in any of these statistics found in these records.

**Clients:**

**Type of Disability**

Mackay Advocacy Inc supports all people with a disability and prioritise on vulnerability i.e. Risk of family breakdown, removal of children or newborn, in danger of facing homelessness, extremely limited or no funding to have their basic needs met and fundamental rights upheld and those who are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect or experiencing family and or domestic violence. As shown, it is people with a psychiatric disability who remain to be the most vulnerable in our community. However, there are many with varying disabilities that are also vulnerable and in need of help to continue to live in the community.

**Ethnicity**

Mackay Advocacy Inc continues to work culturally with the entire community and continues to network with organisations in the community to enhance the understanding of what Mackay Advocacy Inc can do to help people live in their community.

**Source of Funding**

The majority of people Mackay Advocacy Inc supports are unfunded, who live independently and have very little or no supports in this community when they initially contact our office. Part of the advocacy process is to seek funding and support if needed.

**Referred From**

All advocates strive to disseminate information in the form of brochures and other correspondence as well as attending community networking meetings on regular basis. This has been successful in the Mackay and Outreach regions as indicated by the various organisations (government and non-government, public and private) that refer consistently to Mackay Advocacy Inc and often continue to work together towards achieving positive outcomes for people with a disability.

**Type of Housing**

Housing options for people with a disability in the whole of this region continue to be restricted due to the lack of availability of affordable housing. We assist people in applying to the Department of Housing and Public Works (Qld) and support them through the process. This can be a long process as housing eligibility is on a priority basis, based on needs and the appropriateness of their housing situation at the time.

**Source of Income**

**Areas of Advocacy Provided**

Mackay Advocacy Inc is easily accessible to those living in the Mackay area, being in Victoria Street and having a disability parking bay out the front. If people cannot make it into the Mackay office then an Advocate will go to the person’s home or another convenient location e.g. service provider’s office, Acute Care Unit at the hospital, shared accommodation.

The outreach area is service by monthly visits to the Whitsunday area and all areas are visited when needed. The outreach area is networked by interagency meetings, presentations in all areas and it is readily accessible by phone.

**Issues**

A number of people accessing Mackay Advocacy Inc have been receiving advocacy support for several years due to long-term issues particularly involving Child Safety and aiming towards reunification with their children and/or appropriate contacts with their children.

Advocates strive to seek legal representation for clients in these issues and support clients by attending family planning meetings and attending to additional issues that include assessment for lifestyle and financial support and apply for adequate housing to allow for the parents and children to live together.

Advocacy support can be of a very short duration when efforts are made to achieve the best possible outcome in a short time frame, such as assisting someone in a mental health tribunal hearing, challenging unreasonable financial penalties, or making a complaint to the relevant department where the person has experienced discrimination whilst receiving care or medical attention.

Mackay Advocacy Inc supports all people with a disability and prioritise on vulnerability i.e. and those who are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect, those who have no/very little family supports, are in danger of facing homelessness, have extremely limited or no funding. As shown, it is people with a psychiatric disability who remain to be the most vulnerable in our community. However, there are those with varying disabilities that are experiencing serious circumstances of discrimination and are at risk.

# The issues have been across-the-board and demanding, what might appear like a very straight forward issue when investigated, it may be very multifaceted. An example may be a person looking for housing consequently an application to Housing. When investigated the person might also need an Adult Guardian and Public Trustee therefore an application to Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The person may not be registered with Disability Services, needs support to stay independent and live in the community therefore requires to make an application to Disability Services. This would only be a start to ensuring the person resolves their issues, subsequently there would be the collaboration with all these services to have the person’s issues resolved.

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Mackay Advocacy Inc prides itself on creating and implementing thorough electronic recording of information in various data formats that is accurate, secure and comprehensive. Both quantitative and qualitative information is captured in the best possible way for a number of reasons: to inform the community of the issues facing people with disability and how under-resourced most people are, to record how advocacy efforts “makes matters better than when we found them”, and to showcase the viability and efficiency of such a small organisation that has only 4 staff who make positive change to individuals and to this community as a whole. It goes without saying though, that it is impossible to score a rating or put a dollar value on those significant moments when an advocate and client achieve something that imprints someone so emotionally and psychologically – particularly those that are positively powerful and, sometimes, purely life-changing. We sincerely acknowledge the organisations, corporate businesses, families, professionals, state and national bodies that support us and sincerely value what we do.