One person can make a difference

Ken was a man with intellectual disability and a long complex story of rejection, aggression and illness. Ken was caring for his mother who was very ill and dependent on him for her total care and the running of their household. No service worker would help them because of the substandard conditions of their home.

Since Ken’s mother depended on him she maintained control over him by controlling his money, cigarettes and his medications. When Ken became frustrated and angry, she punished him by depriving him of medication and called the police to have him locked away for a time, so that he knew who he had to obey.

A Citizen Advocacy Programme “matched” Ken with Joanne. From the first meeting she felt drawn to look out for and protect him. Ken often decided he did not want any help, but Joanne persevered. About 12 months later his mother passed away. Joanne managed to get the tenancy agreement transferred to Ken, providing long term security and safe accommodation. Ken had undiagnosed and untreated medical conditions, including bad teeth and feet. Slowly and surely Joanne saw to it that his needs for proper medical care and attention were met.

Initially it was difficult for Ken to live alone. Much of his life had been spent in and out of institutions, boarding houses and caravan parks. As Ken’s citizen advocate, Joanne helped him to build and sustain connections with his neighbours and the wider community and realize his dreams to live his own life and have friends.

Their relationship lasted for eleven years, until Ken died unexpectedly one night in his own home. He died finally knowing what it was to be loved, valued and respected. His loss to everyone was enormous.