



The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy

Spring 2025

This edition includes information about

- Nurturing belonging in community with Community for Everyone
- Citizen Advocacy – why relationships matter
- Public speaking workshops for people with intellectual disability
- Advancing Inclusive Governance
- A new Supported Employment Project across Australia
- Resources relating to circles of support
- Meet 3 student interns and hear their advocacy insights
- Dates for your calendar
- Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

A message from our Executive Officer

As we head into Spring, the sector is as busy as ever.

There are lots of things we are concerned about including a lack of resourcing for advocacy and uncertainty around proposed changes to the advocacy program in 2026. We continue to participate in consultations with Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) and do our best to ensure decision makers are aware of the critical need for specialist advocacy for people with intellectual disability.

Here is a link to find out more about the consultations:

<https://dana.org.au/projects/future-of-advocacy/>

We are also taking action!

We have run workshops to increase knowledge and understanding. One workshop with Dr Jo Watson from Deakin University aimed to enhance skills in supported decision making for people who communicate informally. It was terrific that so many colleagues were able to attend.

At a time when many people feel disconnected and powerless, Side By Side Advocacy is working in community to make a tangible difference.

Advocates are continuing to provide high quality, specialist advocacy in the way the person with disability needs.

A recent external audit found that people with disability and their families '...spoke warmly about their experiences with SBSA, sharing how valued and supported they felt. They described SBSA's communication as respectful and caring, with advocates always ready to listen and help. Participants said they wouldn't hesitate to recommend SBSA to their family and friends if they needed advocacy support. Some participants mentioned they had been to SBSA more than once, a reflection of the trust and comfort they feel with the team.'

Side By Side Advocacy's expertise was also recognised in a recent grant allocation. Side By Side Advocacy was chosen to engage with people with disability about employment related advocacy – right across NSW. This will give us the chance to meet with people with intellectual disability who may never had the chance to speak with an advocate. There are more details in the newsletter below!

We are working alongside community members to strive for community inclusion and belonging for people with intellectual disability.

The Citizen Advocacy program continues to prove the value of long term, freely given relationships in speaking up for rights and ensuring that individual experiences are remembered. Citizen Advocacy Coordinator, Lil, has been busy meeting with people interested in becoming citizen advocates.

There are also great things happening at our public speaking workshops for people with intellectual disability with some fabulous guest facilitators.

People with intellectual disability are also getting out and about in community as part of Community for Everyone. People are trying new things and building ordinary connections in their local community.

The newsletter notes ways to get involved with Community for Everyone and the Citizen Advocacy Program.

It is also time to save the date for the Side By Side Advocacy AGM on 20 November 2025. You will have the chance to hear some great presentations from people with intellectual disability, to learn about what Side By Side Advocacy has been doing and what we planned. We hope to see you there!

Kim Roots
Executive Officer



Top row: Images from a fabulous workshop presented by Dr Jo Watson - Listening to people rarely heard

Bottom row left: Tommy the dog lover attends an expo with Social Connector, Lewis (who is taking the photo) as part of Community for Everyone

Bottom row right: Leigh Creighton shares his expertise with peers at a public speaking workshop

Belonging in Community with Community for Everyone

We know that loneliness and isolation is a big issue for many people.

We also know that there are things we can do to facilitate connection and belonging.

Community for Everyone has been connecting people with intellectual disability to their community.

People with intellectual disability have told us what they would like to do. Sometimes it is something the person has wanted to try for a long time.

Sometimes we start with an idea of what meaningful engagement could look like for the person.

We have matched people with intellectual disability with local community members who share their interests.

We have provided training, support and mentoring to assist with the facilitation of connection and belonging in the community.

People are trying new things and getting to know others in their neighbourhood.

Here are some examples.

Tommy and Lewis have been getting involved at the community garden in Ashfield. Tommy enjoys doing practical things and being helpful as well as being outdoors. Lewis considered what Tommy could enjoy and discovered a welcoming community garden in a nearby park. Lewis showed Tommy pictures of the community garden and Tommy decided to give it a try. Now Tommy and Lewis are part of the regular gardening squad. After a recent morning of gardening Lewis reported, 'Tommy had an enjoyable morning at Ashfield Community Garden. He picked dozens of snow peas, and lots of sorrel leaves (even had a taste which wasn't

bad). Finished off with the watering cans. A solid 80 minutes among friends!

When Mary first joined the Community for Everyone project, she was just looking to connect with a community group but did not have a clear idea about which group. She told us she enjoyed craft and knitting. Some research was done and a knitting group was identified in the local area. It was discovered that the knitting takes place regularly at an accessible venue not too far from where Mary lives. The group members are about Mary's age and share her interests. Mary is enjoying herself and getting to know people in her community. "I'm knitting, laughing, and making friends every fortnight."

The project is guided by a fantastic framework developed by the legendary Angela Amado from the University of Minnesota, who reminds us to:

- See the person and their gifts
- Find the people and places where those gifts can be shared
- Show up to the same place, at the same time, with the same people — over time
- One person at a time — one situation, one environment at a time
- Become an asker — asking opens doors to connection
- Always ask, "What more is possible?"
- Be persistent — community building takes time
- Work at the pace of trust.

There are still opportunities to get involved with Community for Everyone.

We are seeking:

- someone interested in bush regeneration in the Ryde area
- a person who loves trivia in Chatswood
- a person who likes craft in the Ryde area.

If you would like to get involved but have other interests, please reach out.

If you know someone with some time to give and interests to share, please pass on our information. There are lots of other interests to be explored!

Here is a link to a flier about the project:

<https://sidebysideadvocacy.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c588e16f565f484b44a7e332e&id=3b7e6a7a62&e=c650cb58f7>

Here is a link to information about the project on our website: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/community-for-everyone/>

To have a chat about the project you can contact us at evelyn@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or call us on 9808 5500.



Top row left: Mary knits with a fellow member of a craft group in West Ryde

Top row right: Rhonda and Dianne build some memories at an exhibition

Bottom row left: Tommy gets gardening at Ashfield Community Garden

Bottom row right: Ruth and Evelyn discuss what Ruth would like to try



Left: Maxine and Lyn go to church
Right: Carole tunes her ukelele

Citizen Advocacy - why relationships matter

We are sometimes asked about how citizen advocacy can be different to more short term advocacy. A recent example of citizen advocacy in action illustrates how the long term nature of relationships can be so important. When medical and historical details were needed as part of a recent National Disability Insurance Scheme funding review, a citizen advocate was able to provide clear context about the person's needs, preferences and history. The citizen advocate had also ensured that important documents and records were retained and kept safe. Their long-term knowledge of the person with disability also made a meaningful difference in ensuring the person was supported in the decision making process and that their voice was heard.

Unfortunately, many people with intellectual disability who lack ongoing, freely given relationships do not retain records of their own histories as systems change, and records are destroyed. This makes it harder to navigate increasingly complex systems.

If you would like to make a difference as a citizen advocate we have planned a range of learning opportunities and chances to connect.

Across the rest of 2025 we will be running short workshops (in person and online, weekday evenings). Topics will include supported decision-making, strategies for building community connections and more. If you would like more information or want to attend, please contact us.

We are also seeking more citizen advocates. Maybe you or someone you know could be a good match.

Do you know someone who likes to take things apart and find out how they work?

Or someone who like technology, geography or construction and would be open to exploring their interests with another person?

We are looking to connect a man in his mid-50s and based in the Ryde area, with a local citizen advocate. He has a great memory for facts, loves learning about how things work and listening to the radio. He has intellectual disability and is blind. He experiences the world through touch and sound. He wants to connect with someone with similar interests and spend time together to get to know each other and help him to establish new connections in the community.

If you can help — or know someone who might — please get in touch. Expressions of interest and suggested contacts are very welcome.

You can contact us at ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or on 9808 5500.



Citizen advocacy Coordinator, Lil

Public speaking workshops for people with intellectual disability

Side By Side Advocacy has been running workshops for people with intellectual disability.

The workshops build public speaking skills and confidence – in whatever way a person communicates.

Each workshop is co-designed and facilitated by a person with intellectual disability. So far Ryan, Shu Hua, Sid and Leigh have led sessions.

People participate in a way that suits them. We have been photographing and recording people in action so they can have a record of what they have done.

Topics have included:

- Planning to speak
- Thinking about the audience
- Tools to help when speaking up.

If this all sounds good, there are still chances to get involved.

There is a workshop planned in Parramatta for 20 November 2025 for people who have not been part of the workshops so far.

No public speaking experience is needed to take part!

Let us know if you or a person you know would like to get involved.

Here is a link to a flier about the workshop: [Public Speaking Workshop Flier](#)

You can contact info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

The workshops are funded by Parramatta Council.





Photographs taken at recent public speaking workshops

Advancing Inclusive Governance

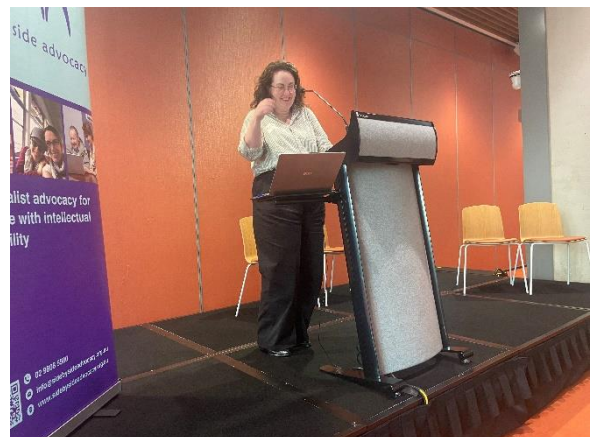
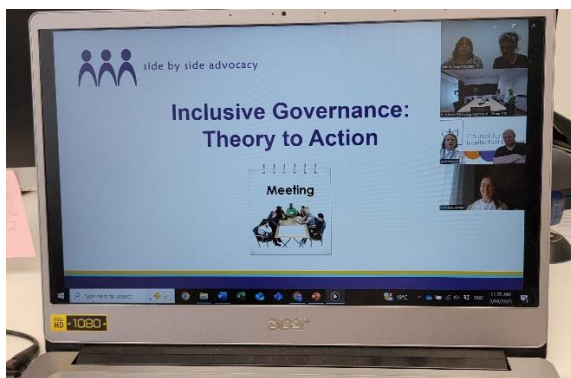
The Inclusive Governance Project has recently run two workshops titled Inclusive Governance: From theory to action. One of these workshops was run in-person, the other online. They were run together with the Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) and the Centre for Disability Studies (CDS). These events not only explained research findings about inclusive governance, they gave practical experience of inclusive governance from the perspective of a CID board member with intellectual disability and the Side By Side Advocacy chairperson Michelle Donnelly.

A Community of Practice is a group that comes together to talk about a common interest or passion, sharing and developing best practice and knowledge. At the Inclusive Governance workshops, the starting of an

Inclusive Governance Community of Practice was suggested with a very positive response. We are running the first Community of Practice meeting on Thursday 11 September. This will be online from 12 noon to 2pm.

Use this link to find out more about the Inclusive Governance Project:
<https://sidebysideadvocacy.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c588e16f565f484b44a7e332e&id=4f83eb8431&e=c650cb58f7>

If you are interested in attending, please contact Bernadette at igp@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or phone 0411 952 974.



Top row left: Image from the online webinar
Top row right: Nicole and Jack from CID present at the webinar
Bottom row left: Katrina and Bernadette present at the workshop
Bottom row right: Erin from CDS presents at the workshop

Supported Employment Advocacy Project

We all know that securing employment can be challenging for people with intellectual disability.

Attitudes and accessibility are just two of the potential barriers.

Recognising these barriers, the Federal Government has funded a joint initiative between Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) and Inclusion Australia. It will run until 30 June 2027.

The project aims to provide case-based advocacy support to people with intellectual disabilities and high support needs who are employed in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), as well as young people transitioning from school to work.

Advocacy support will be short-term and focused on helping individuals review employment options and address employment-related issues.

A key component of this project is providing support for decision-making to ensure that the preferences, rights, and needs of people with disabilities and their families are recognised and upheld.

An advocacy organisation in each state will be providing individual advocacy support as part of the project.

Side By Side Advocacy will be providing this advocacy support across New South Wales. Senior Advocate, Cathy Milne, will be leading the project at Side By Side Advocacy.

This advocacy will focus on employment issues. These could include but are not limited to:

- Resolving issues with employers, potential employers and employment service providers
- Supporting people to understand rights and responsibilities at work
- Reporting or making complaints about discrimination at work
- Supporting people to better understand their government benefits, payments, pensions and support services, and how working can impact these entitlements or
- Any other employment-related issues as they arise.

We will keep you posted about what we are doing and opportunities to get involved with the project.



Senior Advocate, Cathy

Resources

Side By Side Advocacy and Hunter Circles has brought together some resources related to developing community connections. Below are some examples about circles of support that you may find useful.

A guide for family carers, friends and advocates on circles of support: <https://www.inclusiondesignlab.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/IM-Circles-of-Support-Web.pdf>

A guide to natural supports by Changing Days: <https://cosam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-Guide-to-Natural-Supports.pdf>

A starter manual for circles of support:

<https://www.ric.org.au/assets/Uploads/circles-of-support/9e53eaa2e6/Circles-of-Support-Manual-2019.pdf>

A video about circles of support made by circle members:

<https://cosam.org.au/information/circles-of-support-circle-members/> (11 minutes 4 seconds)

Predictors and indicators of a successful circle of support:

<https://cosam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Predictors-and-indicators-that-influence-the-success-of-a-Circle-of-Support.pdf>

Circles of support and personalisation: <https://cosam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Circles-of-Support-HelenS.pdf>

A video on circles of support by Inclusion Melbourne:

<https://youtu.be/yVtCGFHPKWY?feature=shared> (6 minutes 19 seconds)

A video of Margaret sharing how her life has been with circles of support: <https://vimeo.com/69733155> (14 minutes 35 seconds)

Feel free to reach out if you would like more resources on this topic.

Meet the people of Side By Side Advocacy

In each edition of Side By Side we get to know someone from the Side By Side Advocacy community. This month we triple that!

Side By Side Advocacy is currently hosting 3 social work students. Alyssa and Anatheia are from the University of Sydney and Neekita is from Excelsia University College.

Kim sat down with the trio to hear their fresh perspectives on the work of Side By Side Advocacy.



Left to right: Anatheia, Neekita and Alyssa

Kim: Why did you choose Side By Side Advocacy for your placement?

Anatheia: I liked that the organisation raises awareness of the needs of people with intellectual disability and makes sure their voices are heard in important decisions.

Neekita: I had an interest in disability and Side By Side Advocacy's values align with mine. I am passionate about social justice and human rights.

Alyssa: I was curious to learn more about disability advocacy. My younger sister has autism and has some interaction with the NDIS. I wanted to learn about supported decision making and future planning as they impact on people with intellectual disability.

Kim: What have you learned so far?

Anathea: I have learnt that advocacy is not about making decisions for people. It is about protecting rights and respecting choices. I have also learnt about the importance of giving people space and time to express themselves.

Neekita: I am now more aware of systemic barriers. I had not understood that systems set up to help like the NDIS can sometimes get in the way and have a negative impact on people's lives.

Alyssa: I have learnt that concepts that we take for granted like choice, control, and relationships can look so different for people with intellectual disability that have been isolated due to the legacy of institutions or institution like living arrangements. I also have a better idea of what we can do to change things. I think of it as a mindset switch that prioritises the importance of ordinary relationships and getting to know people – rather than a focus on material needs.

Kim: Has anything surprised you about the role of advocates?

Anathea: I have been surprised how powerful and how helpful it can be to spend time, listen and allow time for a person with disability to build confidence. Advocacy does not need to be loud. Small steps can make a big difference.

Neekita: I have had a similar realisation. I am surprised by how important it is to build trust, explain processes and follow up. I now know that advocacy isn't a series of quick appointments. It can be an ongoing process.

Alyssa: I now understand that small details matter as much as the big ones. Grassroot activities and supporting people in communities are important. I used to think of advocacy as being about big causes.

Kim: Tell me more about your previous understanding of advocacy.

Anathea: I thought of advocacy as systemic advocacy. Public speaking. That kind of thing.

Neekita: I thought of advocacy as legal advocacy. I thought about an expert giving advice rather than being beside a person, supporting them through a process.

Alyssa: Like Anathea I used to think of advocacy as being about raising awareness and policy. I didn't think about supporting people to speak up for themselves as much as possible.

Kim: You all seem to have a new perspective.

Anathea: That's true. When I listen to safeguards and planning strategies that include families I know that not everyone has access to family. Not everyone with an intellectual disability has family in their lives. The importance of building unpaid relationships was also new to me. I'd never heard about it. I thought of support as coming from a paid worker like a support worker or a social worker.

Neekita: I now understand that the wider community has a role to play. There is not enough awareness of the role ordinary people can play.

Alyssa: The value of tailor made approaches and small details in people's lives. That's what I keep coming back to. There are positives for systemic advocacy. It's important. But so many people have experiences and life events that are not noted, celebrated or recalled. Small details matter. That's something that specialist advocacy recognises.

Dates for your calendar

There are lots of training opportunities and other dates for your calendar.

Contact the event organisers if you are interested in taking part.

Advocacy Tips and Tools Webinar morning session – hosted by Family Advocacy, 2 September 2025, 10am-11:30am:

<https://family-advocacy.com/event/advocacy-tips-and-tools-webinar-2-september-am/>

Getting to the Heart of What Matters: Greater Depth in Support Work – hosted by Community Resources Unit Ltd, 2 & 9 September 2025, 10am-1pm:

<https://events.humanitix.com/getting-to-the-heart-of-what-matters-part-2-greater-depth-in-support-work>

My Home My Way – hosted by Resourcing Inclusive Communities, 3 September 2025, 10am-3:30pm.

Location: Mercure Sydney Liverpool (Liverpool Catholic Club), Prestons NSW, Australia.

There is a cost to attend:

<https://www.ric.org.au/events/view/my-home-my-way-liverpool>

Addressing Loneliness: Creating real connection in community life – hosted by Imagine More, 11 September 2025, 9:30am-11:30am | 25 September 2025, 9:30am-11:30am:

<https://imaginemore.org.au/events/addressing-loneliness/>

Understanding the NDIS, Self Managing an NDIS Plan – hosted by NDIS, 11 September 2025, 6pm-7pm | 16 September 2025, 11am-2pm | 24 September 2025, 1pm-2pm:

https://events.humanitix.com/understanding-the-ndis-self-managing-an-ndis-plan?_gl=1%2A1ktf7vr%2A_gcl_aw%2AR0NMLjE3NTU0NzU2NDguRU_FJYUIRb2JDae1JdmNTMXNZaVRqd01WMU1JOEFoMGhtUUtORUFB



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Individualised Living Conversations: Shaping the future of individualised living - hosted by Resourcing Inclusive Communities, 11 September 2025, 6pm-7:30pm:

<https://www.ric.org.au/events/view/friendships-and-community-connections>

Friendships and Community Connections Online - hosted by Resourcing Inclusive Communities, 15 September 2025, 10am-12:15pm:

<https://www.ric.org.au/events/view/friendships-and-community-connections>

Kickstarting Customised Employment: 15-minute steps to get started – hosted by Imagine more | 15 September 2025, 12:30pm-1:30pm

<https://imaginemore.org.au/events/kickstarting-c-e/>

Customised Employment Community of Good Practice: Peer Group Applications – hosted by Imagine More, 18 September 2025, 9:30am-11am:

<https://imaginemore.org.au/events/join-cogp-2025/>

Understanding the NDIS: Overview of the Changes to NDIS Legislation – hosted by NDIS, 23 September 2025, 1pm-2pm:

[https://events.humanitix.com/understanding-the-ndis-overview-of-the-changes-to-ndis-legislation-](https://events.humanitix.com/understanding-the-ndis-overview-of-the-changes-to-ndis-legislation-6udjduqa?_gl=1%2A1p70m6v%2A_gcl_aw%2AR0NMLjE3NTU0NzU2NDguRUFJYUIRb2JDaE1JdmNTMXNZaVRqd01WMU1JOEFoMGhtUUtORUFBWUFTQUJFZ0k1Z3ZEX0J3RQ..%2A_gcl_au%2AMzYyNDAXNzMwLjE3NDk3OTYzMTA.%2A_ga%2AMTcyMjY0NzYxNC4xNzQ5Nzk2MzEx%2A_ga_LHKW5FR9N6%2AczE3NTU3MzAyNzAkbg3JGcxJHqXNzU1NzM1MTEwJGozMSRsMCRoMA)

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Just Include Me: Inclusive Practice Workshop for Health Professionals and Staff – hosted by CID, 25 September 2025, 2:30pm-3:30pm | 30 October 2025, 10:30am-11:30am | 27 November 2025, 1pm-2pm:
<https://cid.org.au/event/just-include-me-sep/> (September workshop)

Labour Day Public Holiday - 6 October 2025

Peer Network: Future Planning – hosted by Resourcing Inclusive Communities, 25 September 2025, 12pm-1pm | 30 October 2025, 12pm-1pm | 27 November 2025, 12pm-1pm:
<https://www.ric.org.au/events/view/future-planning-peer-network2025-august-november>
<https://events.humanitix.com/peer-network-future-planning-25th-september-2025>

Public Speaking Workshop - hosted by Side By Side Advocacy, 20 November 2025, 10am-12pm
Location: Phive - 5 Parramatta Square
Contact via Chris@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or phone 9808 5500

Side By Side Advocacy Annual General Meeting (AGM) – hosted by Side By Side Advocacy, 20 November 2025, 6:30pm

Have your say!

Do you have any suggestions about how we could do things better or differently at Side By Side Advocacy?

If you do, we would love to hear from you! You can use the contact information below to tell us.

Email: Feedback@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au
Phone: 02 9808 5500

Information about Side By Side Advocacy

Links to Side By Side Advocacy brochures for you to print, download and/or share:

- Citizen Advocacy: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/citizen-advocacy/>
- Individual Advocacy: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/advocacy-for-people-with-intellectual-disability/>
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Appeals: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/ndis-appeals-support/>
- Inclusive Governance Project Brochure: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Inclusive-Governance-Project-1.pdf>

To view more information about the work we do at Side By Side Advocacy click here: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Side-By-Side-Advocacy-Brochure-1.pdf>



Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

Phone: (02) 9808 5500

Email: info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Website: www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Address: Level 2, Suite 206, 34 Charles St, Parramatta NSW 2150

Office hours: 9am to 5pm

The closest railway station is Parramatta Railway Station



The Parramatta Ferry Terminal is next to the office.

There are accessible parking spots nearby.

There is metred, time-limited on-street parking.

There is a parking station across the road on Charles Street.

Contact us before you come if you need more information about getting to the office.

Website: <https://sidebysideadvocacy.org.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Side-By-Side-Advocacy/100091342617328/>

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/side-by-side-advocacy/?trk=public_profile_experience-item_profile-section-card_image-click&originalSubdomain=au

Side By Side Advocacy promotes and upholds the rights, needs and interests of people with disability to enable full and meaningful participation in the community.

We recognise that people with intellectual disability experience particular barriers in having their voices heard and needs met and for that reason we specialise in providing advocacy for people with intellectual disability.

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Side By Side Advocacy acknowledges the Dharug people, Traditional Custodians on the land on which we live and work. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Side By Side Advocacy is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

For more information, visit: <https://www.health.gov.au/>