



The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy

Autumn 2026

This edition includes updates about:

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- Our Supported Employment Advocacy program
- Ideas to forge a more inclusive community
- Supporting Inclusive Governance
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A message from our Executive Officer

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Side By Side.

This is a crucial time for people with intellectual disability with changes coming to advocacy programs and foundational supports. Accessibility and meaningful participation in important decisions have never been more important. But I wonder if you have been noticing what we have – that people with intellectual disability still experience accessibility barriers, even at disability leadership events. Even where efforts are made it can feel tokenistic.

Side By Side Advocacy Peer Leaders have been attending events, sharing their experiences, providing feedback to organisers and advising us about ways we can keep improving accessibility.

Peer Leaders have been guiding our projects and are members of project advisory groups and communities of practice.

Peer leaders have also been speaking at events about how to better include people with intellectual disability.

All of these efforts are striving to remove barriers that get in the way of people with intellectual disability being included and having their say.

There is a long way to go!

Happily, we have a fabulous, specialist team that is committed to raising and progressing advocacy issues that relate to people with intellectual disability. We have several new colleagues and have included pictures below. Some people work part time, some people work full time and there are some brand new roles with a focus on communication and inclusion support.

The team has been reaching out and meeting with people where they are across New South Wales. They have been sharing information,

supporting decision making, speaking up about issues impacting people, and assisting with advocacy support.

Read on to hear about what we have been up to, ways to get involved and sector happenings.

We hope you join us in exploring and speaking up about what it takes for people with intellectual disability to be included as valued citizens.

Kim Roots
Executive Officer

**Meet
our
staff**



Kim



Lil



Jeff



Andrew



David



Bernadette



Cathy



Shu Hua



Kay



Evelyn



Nicola



Ishika



Sophia



Nicola

Updates on the Supported Employment Advocacy Project

It has been a busy year already for the Supported Employment Advocacy Project! We have had the opportunity to collaborate with our project partners about our outreach and our in-reach efforts. So many people with intellectual disability will not have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with advocates unless we go to them and provide advocacy support in a way and at a pace that suits them.

Senior Advocate Cathy Milne has been travelling around New South Wales to reach out to different organisations and have discussions about how we can provide information and advocacy support related to employment. This project aims to equip people with disability to make informed workplace choices. It has been great to engage with organisations keen to host events and conversations that strive for positive workplace experiences. It has also been terrific to meet up with other advocacy organisations like Justice Advocacy Service Lismore and Illawarra Advocacy to discuss how we can work together. Keep an eye out for workshops and resources in relation to the Supported Employment Advocacy Project soon!

Here is a link to a flier about the project: [Employment Advocacy](#)

You can contact us at sea@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or by phone on 02 9808 5500



Meeting up with our partner organisations - Inclusion Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Council for Intellectual Disability, and Family Advocacy.



Photos taken on the road by Cathy Milne on her travels with the Supported Employment Advocacy project.

Ideas to forge a more inclusive community

The Community For Everyone team has been busy in 2026!

Community for Everyone aims to foster meaningful connections and genuine participation in community life by connecting volunteer social connectors with isolated individuals who share similar interests. It is hoped that these connections will result in enriched lives for those involved as well as strengthening the fabric and capacity of the community to be inclusive.

This year we have hosted meet ups with social connectors, spoken at conferences and run training for new social connectors.

Peer Leaders Shu Hua Chan, Jeff Lai, Leigh Creighton and Rob King have been leading the way.

We are also planning an event with the fabulous Angela Amado who will be coming to Australia in June. Watch this space!

People who take part in the project are getting to know each other, meeting others in their area who share their interests, and having a great time!

George and Chris are getting to know each other better. They met with us this week to share their exploration of the local library. George was keen for us to share the photographs they took.

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

One opportunity involves getting out and about in Chatswood. If you love trivia and live in the Chatswood area, or if you would just like to hear more about other possible connections, we would love to hear from you!

- We would meet you and get to know your interests and what you like to do in your local area.
- You would receive some training about the life experience of many people with intellectual disability, barriers to inclusion and information to assist in overcoming those barriers.
- We would take time to match you with a person with intellectual disability who is keen to explore their interests in their local community.
- You would assist in facilitating connection and belonging.

There are regular meet ups for volunteers with the project.

Here is a link to a flier about the project: [Community for Everyone Flier](#)

Here is a link to information about the project on our website: [Community for Everyone](#)



Above are photos of the Community for Everyone team presenting at the Valid Conference and holding meetings and trainings.
Left: Angela Amado, who will be coming to Australia in June



George and Chris went out in Ryde and joined the local library. Now George can explore his love of books with other people in the local area.

Supporting Inclusive Governance

Side By Side Advocacy is committed to inclusive governance. Our work is informed by team members and board members with intellectual disability, as well as by our leadership and action groups. This year, we have taken another step in strengthening inclusive governance through two initiatives: the creation of a new Advisory Group and the ongoing facilitation of an Inclusive Governance Community of Practice.

New Advisory Group

We are pleased to share that Side By Side Advocacy has formalised a new advisory role for people with intellectual disability through the creation of an Advisory Group. The group held its first meeting on 13 February and will continue to meet monthly.

Current members are Carole Argent, Ryan Boyle, Sarah Butler, Anna Curryer and Shannon Lalor.

The Advisory Group plays several important roles. Members discuss issues that are important to them and share their ideas and perspectives with the Board and Executive Officer. The group may also be asked to provide feedback on specific topics related to Side By Side Advocacy's work. In addition, the Advisory Group provides opportunities for members to build leadership skills by learning, contributing and sharing their experiences.

We look forward to hearing the group's insights and perspectives as they help guide and inform our work supporting people with intellectual disability.

Meet the Advisory Group



Anna



Carole



Ryan



Sarah



Shannon

Inclusive Governance Community of Practice

Side By Side Advocacy also facilitates the Inclusive Governance Community of Practice. A Community of Practice is a group of people who share an interest in a topic and come together to learn from each other, share experiences and develop better ways of working.

This Community of Practice brings together people interested in inclusive governance and in supporting practices that ensure people with intellectual disability are meaningfully included in the decision-making and governance of disability and community organisations.

At the most recent session, participants explored pathways for people to develop the skills and confidence needed to have a voice and take on governance roles.

The group meets online every six weeks at 10am. The next meeting will be held on Friday 27 March.

If you are interested in joining, or would like more information, please contact Bernadette by email igp@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au or call her on 0411 952 974.



Bernadette and Shu Hua attending an online meeting.

[Information and resources about Inclusive Governance](#)

Upcoming events

In-person events in Autumn

- Towards a better life: Two-day Social Role Valorisation theory workshop in Canberra on **12-13 March** (Imagine More). [Buy tickets for Towards a better life: Two-day Social Role Valorisation theory workshop in Canberra on the Imagine More website.](#)
- One of the Kids – Building Inclusion at School workshop (Family Advocacy).
 - [Get tickets for the Gymea One of the Kids: Building Inclusion at School workshop](#) on **19 March**
 - [Get tickets for the Liverpool One of the Kids: Building Inclusion at School workshop](#) on **20 March**.
 - [Get tickets for the Hornsby One of the Kids: Building Inclusion at School workshop](#) on **22 April**.
- The Imagining Home conference – **20-21 May** in Canberra (Imagine More). [Buy tickets for the Imagining Home conference on the Imagine More website.](#)

Online events in Autumn

- Siblings in the wild: For siblings of people with disability, peer conversation – on **17 March** (Imagine More). [Sign up for Siblings in the wild: For siblings of people with disability, peer conversation for free online.](#)
- NDIS Discussion Series – from **18 March** (Family Advocacy). [Sign up for the NDIS discussion series for free online.](#)
- Accessing work experience through school – **18 March** (Resourcing Inclusive Communities). [Sign up for Accessing work experience through school for free online.](#)
- Peer Network: Siblings – monthly (Resourcing Inclusive Communities). [Sign up for Peer Network: Siblings for free online.](#) Sessions include:
 - Thursday **19 March** - Session 1: The plans and concerns we hold in our heads: making assumptions visible and realistic
 - Thursday **2 April** - Session 2: A sibling, not a parent: roles that are sustainable and right
 - Thursday **30 April** - Session 3: Imagining a good life

- Thursday **28 May**: Session 4 - Understanding the system: what's useful to know (and not know).
- Kickstarting Customised Employment: 15-minute steps to get started (Imagine More).
 - [Sign up for the Kickstarting Customised Employment session on 23 March.](#)
 - [Sign up for the Kickstarting Customised Employment session on 11 May.](#)
- Peer Network: Friendships and Community Inclusion – monthly (Resourcing Inclusive Communities). [Sign up for Peer Network: Friendships and Community Inclusion for free online.](#) Sessions include:
 - Wednesday **25 March** - Ingredients for making and maintaining friendships
 - Wednesday **27 May** - Exploring uncharted interests for your family member
 - Wednesday **24 June** - Successes, experiences and new adventures.
- Peer Network: Future Planning – on the **26 March** (Resourcing Inclusive Communities). [Sign up for Peer Network: Future planning for free online.](#)
- Getting Started on the Journey to Meaningful Employment: Webinar 1 – on the **26 March** (Community Resource Unit). [Sign up for Getting started on the journey to meaningful employment for free online.](#)
- Employment rights explained – on the **31 March** (Supported Employment and Advocacy Project). [Sign up for Employment rights explained for free online.](#)
- Peer Network: NDIS for Inclusion - monthly (Resourcing Inclusive Communities). [Sign up for Peer Network: NDIS for Inclusion online.](#) Topics are:
 - **8 April**: Building belonging through socially valued roles
 - **6 May**: Independent Living.
- Co-Design Essentials (Community Resource Unit). [Sign up for Co-Design Essentials for free online.](#) The two sessions are:
 - **30 April**
 - **7 May**

- My Home My Way: A two-part online workshop series (Community Resource Unit). [Buy tickets to My Home My Way: A two-part online workshop series online](#). The two sessions are:
 - **28 May**
 - **4 June**.
- Skip the queue, start the job – an online learning course available **until the 30 June** (Imagine More). [Do the Skip the queue, start the job course for free online](#).

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, Kim met with Nicola Brayan, who recently joined Side By Side Advocacy as a Communications and Inclusion Officer.



Kim: Can you tell us about your role, and what you will be doing at Side By Side Advocacy?

Nicola: I am a Communications and Inclusion Support Officer, which is a new role I am excited to fill. I am working in the Supported Employment Advocacy Project to ensure our decisions are guided by and inclusive of people with disability. I will also be supporting the team to share more information, including online, in our newsletter, and more. You will hopefully be hearing more from me!

Kim: What experience are you bringing to this role?

Nicola: I have experience across a range of areas. I did an internship with Side By Side Advocacy in 2022 – I believe I was their first Communications intern! – as a part of my Bachelor of Advanced Studies degree in Media and Communications. I also have a Bachelor of Arts

degree in Linguistics. A big part of my career so far has involved helping people navigate the legal system and supporting people to be more confident when speaking up. Apart from working in a legal context, I have had a range of roles relating to public speaking. I have been a debating coach for seven years. This sharpened my understanding of communication and collaboration. I was also a university debater, where I learned to think on my feet and speak confidently and clearly. Finally, I have experience in audio communication specifically, specialising in audio as a part of my media degree and having industry experience in audio production. I look forward to using all the skills I have gained in my role at Side By Side Advocacy.

Kim: Why did you choose to join the team?

Nicola: I have always had a passion for inclusion. Side By Side Advocacy's values align very strongly with my own, and I am glad to be able to contribute to more inclusive workplaces. This is also a great opportunity to help communicate some very important messages to a range of equally important people.

Kim: Lastly, what do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Nicola: Lots of things! I love painting, cooking, tending to my herb garden, reading, going to the gym – but, most of all, I love spending time with my partner and our beautiful one-eyed cat.

News items

[NDIS ordered to fund mobility scooter in 'extremely significant' Federal Court ruling](#)

[NDIS Insights 2025-26](#)

[How one change to Disability Discrimination Act could make it less 'daunting'](#)

[Thriving Kids Delayed: DANA Response](#)

[How the 'amazing' Pretzel will help Scott march in Sydney's iconic Mardi Gras parade](#)

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

Emergency contact numbers

Emergencies sometimes arise.

In case of fire, medical or police emergency, dial **000**.

Here is a link to some other emergency contacts that may be useful:

[Emergency contacts](#).

Information about Side By Side Advocacy

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

- [Citizen Advocacy](#)
- [Individual Advocacy](#)
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) Appeals](#)
- [Inclusive Governance Project Brochure](#)

To view more information about the work we do at Side By Side Advocacy click here: [Side By Side Advocacy Brochure](#)





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 Street 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.

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.

