



**The Newsletter of Side By Side Advocacy**

**Summer 2025**

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**This edition includes an end of year update about**

- Our new Employment Advocacy project
- Community for Everyone
- What is happening with our Citizen Advocacy Program
- Public speaking workshops
- Inclusive Governance
- Dates for your calendar
- Resources relating to inclusion in action
- The people of Side By Side Advocacy - meet Andrew Boerma
- Emergency contact details
- Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

## A message from our Executive Officer

Welcome to the final edition of Side By Side for 2025!

As the year draws to a close, it is important to pause, reflect, and recognise the ongoing challenges for people with disability and for the advocacy sector.

It is also important to reflect on what we have achieved together.

We began that reflection at a wonderful AGM, where established and emerging peer leaders came together to share their insights on the issues that matter most to them. It was a fantastic evening that strengthened our connections and reminded us of the power of collective effort. I have included below some of the many great images from the night. I could fill the newsletter with just these!

At the AGM, we took the opportunity to honour longtime board members Coralie Jensen and Ruth Perram with life membership. Their unwavering commitment to Side By Side Advocacy over many years has helped shape our work and deepen our impact, and we are grateful for everything they continue to contribute.

We also said goodbye to the fabulous Chris Faber - Morris who has announced her retirement. Chris has been a huge contributor to our co-design team. But goodbye may be too strong a word. We are delighted that Chris has said she will continue to volunteer with us!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has worked with Side By Side Advocacy to highlight the barriers to community inclusion experienced by many people with intellectual disability. And thank you to all who joined us in exploring and suggesting pathways toward change—toward a world where everyone is valued equally, diversity is celebrated, needs are recognised, and opportunities are realised.

So what can you expect in 2026?

- Peer Leaders will be sharing their insights at the VALID conference in January
- There will be more employment and more leadership roles for people with intellectual disability at Side By Side Advocacy
- There will be more workshops and more opportunities for peer collaboration
- We will host an event that brings together people and organisations with a commitment to inclusion for all - including people with intellectual disability who are seldom heard.

And that is just the beginning!

In this edition, we will share an update on what the team has been working on as well as more of what is to come in 2026!

The Side By Side Advocacy team will be taking a short break at the end of December. Our office will close at 5pm on 24 December 2025 and will reopen on Monday 12 January 2026.

We wish you a warm and restful holiday season, and we look forward to reconnecting in the new year!

Kim Roots  
**Executive Officer**



Above are just some of the great moments captured at the AGM!



More great moments from the AGM!



More great moments from the AGM!

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### **Employment Advocacy - End of year update**

Side By Side Advocacy is proud to be leading Employment Advocacy in New South Wales. Our team has strong experience supporting people with intellectual disability, including our in-reach work during the Disability Royal Commission. This new project allows us to continue and strengthen that work and to share our insights with other advocates.

The Supported Employment Advocacy project is funded by the Federal Government and runs nationally through Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) and Inclusion Australia.

In New South Wales, Side By Side Advocacy is the DANA partner delivering employment advocacy. Senior Advocate, Cathy Milne, is leading the project along with Advocate, Andrew Boerma.

We are providing individual employment advocacy to people with intellectual disability and people with complex communication and decision making support needs.

This includes supporting people to understand their rights at work, resolve workplace issues and addressing barriers to employment. It also includes support to understand different work options and exploring new employment or leadership opportunities.

In addition to individual advocacy support, we have also been travelling across NSW to meet people with disability, their families employers and other community organisations who work with people in supported employment. These visits help us understand local barriers and possibilities, including opportunities for microbusiness and personalised employment pathways.

This year we have met with people in Lithgow, Bathurst, Orange, the Central Coast, Newcastle, Cessnock, Maitland, Kurri Kurri and Sydney. Having met so many wonderful people, plans are underway to catch up again in the new year. We also have plans to get out and about across more of NSW. First up in January will be a visit to Lithgow and the Northern Rivers, with trips to the Riverina, New England and the Illawarra to follow shortly after.

We will also be hosting some gatherings at Side By Side Advocacy for people with intellectual disability keen to learn more about their rights at work.

Get in touch if you would like to know more about accessing advocacy support, the Side By Side Advocacy gatherings or if you would like to host an information session or workshop on topics like: Rights at Work, Work Health and Safety, Leadership or Planning for the Future.

You can contact us at [sea@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:sea@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au) or by phone on 02 9808 5500





Top row left on the previous page: Senior Advocate, Cathy Milne, catching up with Peer Leaders from Community for Everyone at 437 Hunter in Newcastle during her travels

Top row right on the previous page: with board members from Hunter Circles Ryan and Jo as well as Hunter Circles Executive Officer, Jen Cush

Bottom row above: Images from a recent road trip and out meeting with people to discuss the Employment Advocacy project

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### **Community for Everyone**

The Community for Everyone team has been out in community!

We have been speaking at conferences, participating in expos, sharing information at interagency meetings, attending community gatherings, joining with change agencies and more!

We have been meeting with people with intellectual disability where they are.

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 as 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 still keen to match more people with intellectual disability with local community citizens in the Ryde area.

If you love nature or arts and crafts or the royal family – or if you would just like to hear more, we would love to hear from you!

To have a chat about the project you can contact us at [evelyn@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:evelyn@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au) or call us on 9808 5500.

On the next 2 pages are some photographs showing the Community for Everyone team meeting, collaborating and networking





## **Update from the Citizen Advocacy program**

### **Watch out for two hybrid workshops to be held in early 2026!**

New citizen advocates recently participated in two online and in-person workshops run by citizen advocacy coordinator, Lil Paterson, and social work interns, Alyssa, Anatheia and Neekita. During these sessions, we looked at important ideas and strategies for new citizen advocates and shared examples of advocacy efforts by current citizen advocates. The first workshop focused on "Communication, supported decision-making and getting to know each other" and the second workshop was on "Fundamentals of citizen advocacy and support from Side By Side Advocacy".

We will be holding workshops 3 and 4 in early 2026. The topics will be relevant to new citizen advocates, Community For Everyone Social Connectors and others in the Side By Side Advocacy community. In workshop 3, we will be looking at strategies to develop community connections and help expand a person's network. In workshop 4, we will explore some of the structures and processes that shape people's lives including guardianship orders, NDIS plans, restrictive practices, financial management and others.

If you are interested in attending or know someone who might like to, please contact Lil Paterson on 0424 187 974 or via [ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au).

### **Current citizen advocacy call out**

Lachlan\* is in his mid-40s, lives in Pendle Hill, works locally and trains with Special Olympics. We are looking for someone nearby who would enjoy getting to know him — maybe while watching the footy or working in his garden. As trust grows, they could also help Lachlan to talk through big and small decisions and explore ways to be more involved in the local community.

You can contact us at [ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:ca@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au) or on 9808 5500.



Left to right: Andrew Boerma, Citizen Advocacy Coordinator Lil Paterson and Evelyn Gyan at an Expo in Ryde

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### **Public speaking workshops for people with intellectual disability**

Hear My Voice public speaking workshops brought together some passionate self advocates keen to raise awareness of the issues that matter to them.

Workshops were co-designed and presented by people with intellectual disability. We even had some experienced, visiting co-presenters. It was fabulous to observe confidence growing as the year progressed.

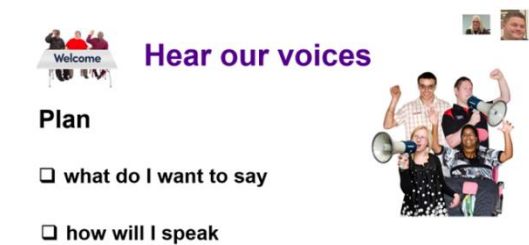
Thank you to the City of Parramatta for funding these workshops.

Congratulations to everyone that took part!

We have had lots of people telling us they loved these workshops and want more.

Get in touch if you are a person with intellectual disability who wants to take part in public speaking workshops in 2026.

Phone: 02 9808 5500 or email [info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)



**Hear our voices**

Welcome

**Plan**

- what do I want to say
- how will I speak



**Speak up about issues**



Above are some slides and images from the workshops

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## Advancing Inclusive Governance

The Inclusive Governance Project has had another busy year. We have worked hard to make sure that people with intellectual disability are included in the decision-making and governance of disability organisations.

We have:

- given advice to disability organisations,
- presented at conferences,
- written articles,
- created videos,
- recorded podcasts and
- facilitated a Community of Practice.

All of these actions have the same objective, to make sure that the views and lived experience of people with intellectual disability can guide the way that disability organisations work.

Thanks to everyone that has helped us this year, including our peer leaders Shu Hua Chan, Jeff Lai and Katrina Sneath.





Top row on the previous page: Katrina and Bernadette presenting  
Bottom row from left on the previous page: An image of where to find resources on the Side By Side website  
On this page: Bernadette with an award winning poster

## Dates for your calendar

Wednesday 24 December 2025 at 5pm - Side By Side Advocacy office will close

Thursday 25 December - Christmas Day public holiday

Friday 26 December - Boxing Day public holiday

Thursday 1 January - New Year's Day public holiday

Monday 12 January 2026 - Side By Side Advocacy Office will reopen

Monday 16 January - [Submissions close: A new Commonwealth individual disability advocacy program](#)

Monday 26 January 2026 - Australia Day public holiday

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## Resources

Side By Side Advocacy and Hunter Circles has brought together some resources related to developing community connections. Below are some examples to facilitate action inclusion.

Contact us if you would like us to email links to these resources: [info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

[Every Moment Has Potential](#), Skills for Active Support, Living With Disability Research Centre, online training resource

[Supporting Inclusion](#), La Trobe University, online training resource

[Disability Guidelines for Trauma-Informed Practice](#), Blue Knot Foundation, 2021

[Enabling Positive Risk: Putting Positives First](#), Living With Disability Research Centre, online training resource

[\*The La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework\*](#),

online training resource

[Making My Own Decisions](#), Council for Intellectual Disability, video

[Supported Decision Making Hub](#), Council for Intellectual Disability,

online resource

[My Rights: Supported Decision Making](#), WA's Individualised

Services, online resource

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

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### **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 Side By Side Advocacy's newest advocate, Andrew Boerma.



**Kim:** Tell everyone about your role at Side By Side Advocacy?

**Andrew:** I am working as an Advocate in two areas: Individual

Advocacy and the Employment Advocacy Project.

**Kim: Could you share what your roles involve?**

**Andrew:** In Individual Advocacy, I support people with disability to solve problems, make decisions and advocate for their rights. It could relate to living safely in their home, accessing support and entitlements, or being treated with respect and dignity in a hospital or by the NDIS.

The Employment Advocacy Project is a NSW-wide project. We are providing advocacy support for people with intellectual disability with work related advocacy issues.

We are also running workshops for groups on topics like: Rights at Work, Work Health and Safety, Leadership or Planning for the Future.

We have been traveling around NSW meeting with people! Recently, I visited Australian Disability Enterprises in Lithgow, Bathurst and Orange.

We have also been going to expos, interagency meetings and whole range of other events to spread the word.

**Kim: What did you do before coming to Side By Side Advocacy?**

**Andrew:** Lots of things! I have worked in the disability and community sector for more than 10 years. I started my career by supporting people to advocate for their rights at work. After studying a Masters of Social Work, I worked as part of the Ability Links program to promote access and inclusion in our community and to support people with disability to build sustainable skills and connections. I also worked as Local Area Coordinator and then an

Advocate, before working in Participation and Project Support with an organisation led by and for people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In the latter, I supported the Board and organisation to be inclusive, and peer workers to lead projects relating to peer support in metro and regional areas. In my last role, I worked in a community centre where I enjoyed contributing to an inclusive space where people came to connect with their neighbours, make friends, look out for each other and get support if they needed it.

**Kim: What do you find satisfying about your current role?**

**Andrew:** I enjoy putting my values into action. As an Advocate, I enjoy working with people with disability to defend their human rights and work towards social justice and equitable outcomes. I enjoy celebrating diversity and learning from and respecting people's lived experience.

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**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](mailto:Feedback@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)  
Phone: 02 9808 5500

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## Emergency contact numbers

Emergencies sometimes arise over the holiday season.

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](#).

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## 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](#)



## Where to find us



## Contact details for Side By Side Advocacy

**Phone:** (02) 9808 5500

**Email:** [info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](mailto:info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

**Website:** [www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au](http://www.sidebysideadvocacy.org.au)

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

**Office hours:** 9am to 5pm

**Note that the office will be closed during the holiday season.**

**The office will close: 5pm on 24 December 2025**

**The office will reopen: 9am on Monday 12 January 2026**

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.

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