



2024 – 2025

Annual Report

Side By Side Advocacy

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About Us

Who We Are

Side By Side Advocacy is an independent, community-based advocacy organisation that promotes and upholds the rights, needs and interests of people with intellectual disability to enable full and meaningful participation in the community.

Our Vision



Our vision is for a world where people with disability are equal and valued, where diversity is celebrated, needs are fulfilled and opportunities realised.



Our Purpose

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.

Our 5 Primary Focus Areas

- Citizen Advocacy
- Individual Advocacy
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Appeal Support
- Inclusive Governance Research
- Capacity building projects for people with intellectual disability

Our Values



Inclusive

We embrace diversity and treat everyone with dignity and respect



Accountable

We are transparent and ethical in all we do



Tenacious

We act with vigour and a determination to achieve the best results

Our Way of Working

We are committed to providing high quality advocacy for people with disability. Our advocacy puts people with disability first and is not motivated by other interests.

We strive to minimise conflicts of interest and our processes are fair and transparent. Our way of working affirms the dignity, independence, and autonomy of people with disability. We seek to maximise opportunities for people with disability to take control of their lives and live a good life as contributing members of their community.

Our advocacy is tailored to suit the unique needs of each person seeking assistance. We work respectfully and sensitively with diverse cultural groups and with First Nations People and members of the LGBTQIA+ communities.



Our Principles

Each person's life is of equal and inherent value and worth

People with disability have the right to advocacy and to protection from devaluation, neglect, abuse and the denial of human rights

People with disability have the right to be treated as individuals, and not in terms of their disability

All people are entitled to comprehensive and appropriate support to ensure full inclusion into the community

All people have the right to make decisions about their own lives

All people should be treated with dignity and respect

All people have the right to be safe, valued and accepted

All people have the potential to grow and develop and should be provided with opportunities

All people have the same human and legal rights regardless of age, race, disability, religious belief, sex, sexuality and gender identity

People with disability are to be treated in accordance to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



Chair Person's Report

Michelle Donnelly

Side By Side Advocacy has a long and important history. I was honoured to work with John Roarty, a strong disability rights activist, to help start Side By Side Advocacy in the 1980s. Working with John was an amazing experience. We first met at Weemala, the institution described in John's book *Captives of Care*. His wisdom guided much of our early work.

Being part of Side By Side Advocacy has shaped how I support my own family members with disabilities and inspired me to become a Citizen Advocate. It was a great honour to serve as Chairperson in 2024–2025.

Advocacy Work and Challenges

Over the past year, we have seen a big increase in both the number and the complexity of advocacy issues and concerns. This has made it even more difficult to respond quickly to urgent matters, but we remain determined to do so.

At one board meeting, Cathy Milne gave a powerful presentation describing a typical day for a senior advocate working at the intersection of domestic violence, homelessness, and intellectual disability—a difficult and skilled job. David Briggs summed it up well when he said, “If only one system would work!”

Thank you to Cathy, David, and Preeti Thadani for your dedication and skill in handling such complex advocacy needs.

Chairperson's Report

Continued

While it's encouraging that so many people trust us for help, it's also worrying to see how many unmet needs drive people to seek advocacy. Issues like abuse, neglect, homelessness, discrimination, and poverty still affect people with intellectual disabilities at much higher rates.

We are deeply grateful to our hardworking and skilled staff for staying true to our values. A special thank-you to Lil Paterson for her success in creating Citizen Advocacy matches, especially in regional areas.

New Initiatives and Achievements

This year, we introduced several new policies and programs, including a mentorship program for board members. Thank you to Ruth Perram for mentoring board secretaries in preparing reports and audit documents.

We also co-designed Terms of Reference for an Advisory Group made up of people with intellectual disabilities to provide input directly to the board. Chris Faber Morris updated the Board Manual, and Belinda Henry became a valued Board Advisor, continuing to provide valuable expertise.

We successfully received new grants from Parramatta Council and the Department of Social Services.



Chairperson's Report

Continued

The Community for Everyone project, run with Hunter Circles, has helped people who were socially isolated for many years reconnect with their communities. Thank you to Kim Roots, Shu Hua Chan, Jeff Lai, Evelyn Gyan, Jen Cush, Leigh Creighton, and Robert King for their thoughtful and inspiring work.

We also received a grant for the Supported Employment Advocacy project, which will expand our work across all of New South Wales. This builds on our successful outreach during the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Good luck to Cathy Milne, Andrew Boerma, and Kriti Thapa as they begin this new project.

Highlights and Governance

One of last year's highlights was the inspiring presentation by the Parramatta Leadership Group—Jeff Lai, Ryan Boyle, Sarah Butler, Terry Whitehouse, Siddharth Chandran, and Carole Argent—at our AGM.

The Inclusive Governance Project, led by Bernadette Curryer and her co-design team have published thoroughly researched resources. Their work has been vital in helping us improve inclusive governance practices within our organisation.

We also completed a board self-evaluation using standards from the Australian Institute of Company Directors, which confirmed that our recent changes are consistent with best practice.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Thank you to:

- Ben Pilipowski for valuable policy advice and insight.
- Steve MacDonald for IT support and managing cybersecurity.
- Faz Hares for secretarial support and help with recruitment.
- Toni Ng and Kay Jones for clear, detailed financial reports.

Chairperson's Report

Continued

Under the leadership of Kim Roots, Side By Side Advocacy has continued to grow as a respected voice for people with disabilities. Kim's strategic thinking, collaborative style, and strong values have helped us face challenges and create new advocacy opportunities. The Board is deeply grateful for Kim's dedication, professionalism and compassion.

A Year of Transition

Although I have served on the Board for over 30 years, this was my first year as Chairperson. I have even greater respect for Coralie Jensen, who served as Chairperson for 17 years, and for Ruth Perram, who served as Secretary for 10 years.

Both Coralie and Ruth are stepping down from the Board this year. The Board has unanimously nominated them for Life Membership in recognition of their long, dedicated service and their commitment to defending the rights and interests of people with disabilities.

Michelle Donelly | Chairperson





Executive Officer's Report

Kim Roots

At Side By Side Advocacy, we believe every person with intellectual disability has the right to speak up, be heard, and have real influence over their own life. Our work is not just about navigating systems—it is about walking alongside people as they explore what matters to them and take steps toward a life that reflects their choices, strengths, and goals.

We are proud to be an advocacy organisation that stands with people who are often excluded, underestimated, or not listened to. Our approach is grounded in relationships. We take the time to get to know each person, and we adapt our advocacy to suit how they communicate and what they want from their life—not just what the system offers.

We know that many people with intellectual disability have had few genuine opportunities to make decisions or be recognised for who they are. Some have lived in group settings or spent time in places where choices were limited. Others have had very few people in their lives who were not paid to be there. That is why independent advocacy matters—and why our work is personal, not transactional. We are here for the person, not the program.

This past year has been full of meaningful moments and exciting developments. We have continued to support people to express what they want, to be respected, and to participate fully in their communities. We have also expanded our reach, connecting with more people in new and creative ways.

Executive Officer's Report

Continued

Our projects continue to grow and evolve. Community for Everyone, the Inclusive Governance Project, Hear My Voice public speaking workshops, Parramatta Action Group and the Parramatta Leadership Group have created fresh opportunities for people with intellectual disability to build confidence, speak up, take on leadership roles, and influence the world around them.

We were proud to publish new resources and research on inclusive governance, which are now being used to support real involvement—not tokenism—in decision-making spaces. We also received new funding to begin a state-wide project focused on rights at work. This means we can connect with people across NSW—wherever they are—and support conversations about fair treatment, respect, and choices in employment.

These achievements reflect the strength and dedication of everyone involved in Side By Side Advocacy. We have seen:

- More people joining us as members and showing their support at events
- More leaders with intellectual disability stepping forward to share their ideas and lead change
- A team of staff who bring sophisticated knowledge and analytical skills, tenacity, and deep commitment to their work every day
- A Board that continues to guide our work with wisdom, experience, and passion.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to the team at Side By Side Advocacy.

Our advocacy and our projects could not meet the needs of people with disability without this skilled, creative, experienced and tenacious group of people. You all make a huge contribution!

Executive Officer's Report

Continued

Thank you also to our project partners at Hunter Circles. It has been a great pleasure to work alongside you to raise awareness of the life experiences of profoundly isolated people with intellectual disability and to offer frameworks and principles for change.

I would also like to congratulate the Side By Side Advocacy board on navigating a year of growth and change. It has been a pleasure to work with you all. Michelle Donnelly, contributed to the organisation as our new Chair and in so many other ways. You are always calm, considered and insightful and your historical knowledge adds depth and insight to all we do.

I would also like to particularly acknowledge the fabulous contribution of Ruth Perram and Coralie Jensen who are both stepping down from the board after many years of support for the work of Side By Side Advocacy in various roles including as Secretary and Chair. Both have been a great support to me in my role and to the work of the organisation more broadly.

And we would not be the same organisation without our many fabulous members who get involved and amplify the vision of the organisation.

We are proud to be part of an organisation that keeps asking the important questions: Are we truly listening? Are we supporting real choice? Are we doing all we can to advance inclusion and justice?

Side By Side Advocacy is about standing with people, not speaking for them. It is about relationships built on trust, shared values, and a belief in equality.

We look forward to continuing this work—always learning, always growing, and always moving forward, side by side.

Kim Roots | Executive Officer



Citizen Advocacy



**The Parramatta
Leadership Group**



**The Parramatta
Action Group**

Hear My Voice Public Speaking Workshops



**Individual
Advocacy**



**Appeals
Support**

Inclusive Governance Project

Community for Everyone



Supported Employment Advocacy Project



The Parramatta Leadership Group

The Parramatta Leadership Group met throughout 2024 and aimed to help people with intellectual disability develop the skills of leadership.

The key areas of learning were:

- Understanding advocacy
- Sharing my story with impact
- Understanding issues affecting people with disability
- Connecting with others.

We met for 13 sessions between July and December 2024. A total of 18 people attended at least one session, with a core group of 11 regular attendees. Group members could join either in person or online, with most opting for face to face participation.

We also met with 90 additional people with disability at information sessions where we gave group presentations for people with disability working in Australian Disability Enterprises.

The group identified and explored 4 issues they believed to be of importance to people with intellectual disability:

- Health
- NDIS
- Stereotyping
- Advocacy

Group members presented at the 2024 Side By Side Advocacy AGM.



We also learnt about the different levels of government and we toured both the council chambers at Parramatta City Council and finished the year with a tour of NSW Parliament House.

This project has been supported through a City of Parramatta Council Community Grant.

Facilitators



Shu Hua Chan
Peer Leader



Bernadette Curryer
Facilitator



Chris Morris
Facilitator





Hear My Voice

Chris Morris

People with intellectual disability often have fewer opportunities to develop skills and confidence over time in ways that align with their preferred learning styles. This includes skills like public speaking. Communication settings and social networks are not always inclusive or accessible, which can limit meaningful participation.

Many mainstream public speaking programs are not designed with people with intellectual disability in mind and public speaking training is shaped by narrow ideas about what makes a “good” speaker, which may reflect ableist standards. These expectations can exclude and stereotype speakers who communicate differently, contributing to anxiety and reducing confidence for people who do not fit the typical mould.

Members of the Parramatta Leadership Group, all of whom have intellectual disability, shared that they enjoyed taking part and learning about the different civic roles they can pursue. When asked what support they would like, they said they often feel nervous about public speaking and have not always had chances to practice these skills. They expressed a clear desire to build their confidence and continue learning in supportive, inclusive environments.

We have been undertaking a range of confidence building workshops - each co-facilitated by a person with intellectual disability.

This public training will continue until December 2025.

This project has been supported through a City of Parramatta Council Community Grant.

Hear My Voice Feedback



‘It is good to know better about my strengths and skills and working and collaborating together’

‘I have learnt the art of social interaction without saying words – informal ways to interact with others’

‘Prepare very well and get all the items you will need ready. I learnt there are different audiences for different groups and what to say will be different’

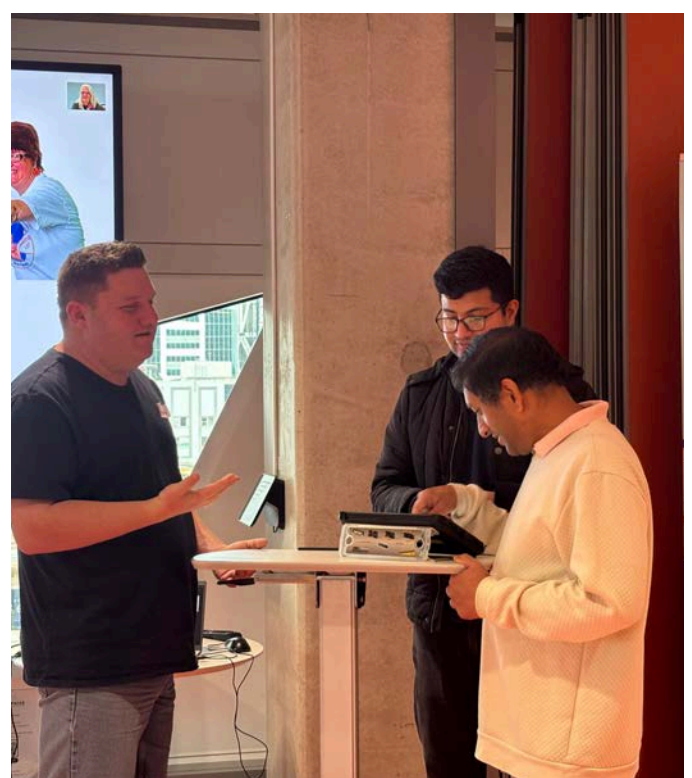
‘The importance of the main message - get your point across’

‘Different people have different issues they want to raise’

‘Listen to what people have to say’

‘Practicing helps a lot’







Citizen Advocacy

Lil Paterson

At Side By Side Advocacy, our Citizen Advocacy program continues to demonstrate how powerful one-to-one relationships can be.

This program brings people together - pairing a person with intellectual disability with a committed community member who takes on a long-term, voluntary advocacy role.

These relationships are not formal or paid. They are built on shared values, mutual respect, and a belief in the rights and value of every person. Citizen Advocates are everyday people who walk alongside someone who may be at risk of being excluded or not listened to. In many cases, Citizen Advocates are the only consistent, unpaid person in someone's life.

In 2024-2025, we saw the Citizen Advocacy program continue to grow in reach and impact. We supported new matches between community members and people with intellectual disability—carefully facilitated to ensure compatibility and a strong foundation for a trusting relationship. We also continued to support many long-standing partnerships, some of which have been going strong for over 20 years.

We provided tailored training, resources, and ongoing support to help each citizen advocate feel confident in their role. Whether supporting someone to navigate a housing issue, attend a health appointment, understand their rights, or simply be more connected in the community, advocates were there in meaningful and practical ways.



Citizen Advocacy

Continued

This year we also focused on building greater awareness of Citizen Advocacy in the wider community. We delivered presentations and outreach, sharing the value of this unique model of advocacy and encouraging more people to get involved. Our team supported Citizen Advocates through complex issues and celebrated the many quiet, powerful wins that come from strong advocacy relationships - accessing long needed support, resolving tricky situations, or even just making sure someone's voice was heard.

Citizen Advocacy works because it is based on longstanding connections.

It is about people choosing to show up for one another—not because it is their job, but because they care. It's a model that recognises the strengths and potential of everyone involved.

At Side By Side Advocacy, we take care in making thoughtful matches and provide the tools, support, and encouragement needed along the way. We also create opportunities for advocates to connect with each other, share stories, and reflect on their experiences.

As services remain under pressure and systems grow more complex, the role of Citizen Advocates is more important than ever. In the coming year, we will continue to welcome new advocates, support existing matches, and spread the word about how this program can make a lasting difference.

Citizen Advocacy reminds us that change does not always come from big systems. Sometimes, it starts with one person choosing to stand beside another—and staying there.

Citizen Advocacy

Continued

Citizen Advocacy shows us that change often begins with one relationship - one person choosing to be present, to listen, and to act - not as a professional, but as a fellow community member committed to fairness and inclusion for all.



Having worked with Ali for many years I was very sad when she left our service. With no family of her own I was worried about her welfare and felt a deep commitment to maintain contact with her and keep involved on her journey with her new service provider. Citizen advocacy has allowed me to stay involved and connected. I have received wonderful assistance and support from the advocacy service and, although I have a very busy life, have been able stay involved in Ali's life. I enjoy visiting her when I can and it is very rewarding to feel I can, in a small way, contribute to her welfare and be the 'family' she would not otherwise have."





Individual Advocacy

Cathy Milne and
Preeti Thadani

Supporting Rights, Choice, and Inclusion

At Side By Side Advocacy, individual advocacy is a core focus of our work. It is about standing beside people with intellectual disability to make sure their rights are upheld, their voices are heard, and their choices are respected. We work with each person to help them understand their options, make informed decisions, and live a life that reflects what matters most to them. Our focus is always on the individual—their goals, their way of communicating, and their pace.

Over the past year, we delivered 3,097 individual advocacy sessions, supporting people facing both immediate needs and long-term challenges. Our work covered a range of areas including the NDIS, health, housing, education, and legal systems.

Many people came to us at difficult or stressful times in their lives.

Common issues included:

- Family and domestic violence
- Crisis following the death of a loved one
- Lack of appropriate disability or health support
- Financial abuse or coercive control
- Difficulty accessing medical care or referrals
- Long-term effects of institutionalisation

Individual Advocacy

Continued

Supporting decision-making is a key part of our work.

Each person received individualised support that was adapted to their situation and communication style. Our advocates take the time to learn how each person expresses themselves—whether through words, gestures, facial expressions, eye gaze, or objects of reference. We use tools such as pictures, drawings, and visits to familiar places to make information clearer and easier to understand.

Supporting decision-making is at the heart of our approach. Real choice takes time, trust, and understanding, and our advocates work carefully to ensure people are supported to make their own decisions.

This involves:

- Taking time to listen and reflect together
- Presenting information in accessible, meaningful ways
- Respecting each person's preferences and pace
- Promoting informed choice and self-determination

Alongside our direct advocacy, we also focus on building understanding and inclusion in the wider community. This year, we:

- Presented at Australian Disability Enterprises to share information about rights at work
- Participated in Expos
- Spoke at community events

Through these activities, we continued to raise awareness, share lived experiences, and strengthen community connections.

Individual Advocacy

Continued

Our advocacy has led to many positive outcomes, including:

- Preventing unnecessary hospital admissions
- Supporting people to make informed health and life decisions
- Avoiding inappropriate involvement with the criminal justice system
- Strengthening support networks, particularly for adults with ageing parents.

At the same time, our work continues to be shaped by wider systemic challenges.

We see the impact of:

- Delays and long waiting periods when people need urgent support
- Barriers to banking and identification for those without formal documentation
- Overstretched homelessness and crisis services
- “Digital first” government processes that exclude some people
- Sudden changes to NDIS procedures introduced without clear communication
- High turnover among disability support staff
- A shortage of skilled support coordinators, increasing the need for advocacy.

These challenges highlight why independent advocacy is so important. Our team remains committed to providing support that is rights-based, person-centred, and grounded in respect. We continue to:

- Support inclusion and connection in community life
- Promote safety and freedom from harm
- Ensure each person has real choice and control over their own life

Systemic Advocacy

Every advocacy relationship reminds us why our work matters—because every person with intellectual disability deserves to be heard, respected, and supported to live with dignity and independence.

At Side By Side Advocacy, we know that many of the challenges people with intellectual disability face are not just individual—they are part of larger systems. That's why, alongside our individual advocacy, we also work to improve the systems themselves through systemic advocacy.

During this reporting period, we contributed to systemic advocacy in many ways. This included:

- Taking part in consultations and surveys
- Meeting with decision makers and government representatives
- Attending interagency and sector forums
- Providing feedback to the NDIS and other services
- Sharing what we learn through our advocacy work

Key Highlights

- We met with members of Advisory Councils to share how recent NDIS changes are affecting people with intellectual disability.
- We spoke with Legal Aid NSW, the Mental Health Commission, and the NDIA Community Engagement Team, offering real-life insights to help shape policy and services.



Systemic Advocacy

Continued

We supported research and projects focused on inclusion, including:

- Health Action Planning (National Centre for Excellence in Disability Health)
- Digital harms (RMIT Digital Ethnographic Research Centre)
- Inclusive genetic healthcare (GeneEQUAL)

We contributed to national and state-level networks, such as:

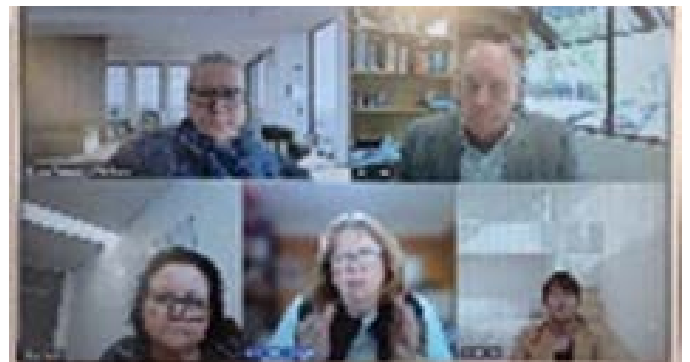
- National Centre for Disability Advocacy (data working group)
- NSW Disability Advocacy CEO Network
- NSW Interagency on Disability Policy
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia CEO Network

We contributed to Parramatta Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and supported people with intellectual disability to share their views directly. Some people with intellectual disability who contributed had never had the opportunity to share their view before.

We shared insights about barriers for people with complex needs—especially those without unpaid support—across many forums, including meetings with:

- NSW Trustee and Guardian
- Community Visitors Scheme (Aged and Disability Commission)
- Western Sydney charity sector roundtable
- We worked with Family Advocacy on inclusive education campaigns and engaged with academics to raise awareness of the challenges faced by parents with intellectual disability.

We also raise issues with decision-makers when advocacy matters reveal broader systemic problems. This can include making formal complaints, contacting senior NDIA staff, or working with other advocacy organisations to push for change. Finally, we continue to share updates, opportunities, and key insights through our website, newsletter, and community presentations - keeping people informed and engaged in systemic issues that matter.





Appeals Support

David Briggs

During this reporting period, Side By Side Advocacy supported people with disability to challenge decisions made by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) through the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART). Our work in this area is grounded in a commitment to fairness and empowerment—ensuring people understand their rights, know their options, and have support to speak up when systems fail them.

This year, our advocacy team:

- Delivered **1,159** advocacy sessions
- Worked alongside **177** individuals engaged in ART appeals
- Promoted self-advocacy and encouraged follow-up support where needed

Side By Side Advocacy provided different types and levels of advocacy support, depending on availability and the needs of the person appealing.

As demand for advocacy support increased and the availability of advocates stayed the same, we continued providing information sessions with opportunities for follow up support. This meant that more people with disability could get the information they needed to understand the appeals process and prepare.

The appeals process can be daunting, especially for people with intellectual disability or those without informal supports. For people with disability who accessed ongoing appeals support, our advocates walk alongside people every step of the way - explaining procedures, helping prepare documents, and linking them with legal and community supports. We aim not only to achieve fair outcomes but also to build confidence and understanding so that people feel more equipped to advocate for themselves in the future.

Appeals Support

Continued

Despite the complexity of the system, our appeals advocacy led to many positive results, including:

- Gaining access to urgently needed supports following successful appeals
- Strengthening self-advocacy skills through one-off and short-term support
- Improving people's ability to navigate mainstream services beyond the NDIS
- Providing direct assistance during tribunal hearings, including document preparation and referrals to legal services.

Appeals support remains a vital part of ensuring people with disability receive fair and respectful treatment under the NDIS. However, the complexity of the system and the shortage of available advocacy services mean that many people remain at risk of being excluded or unheard.

Side By Side Advocacy remains committed to standing alongside people with intellectual disability in these difficult processes. Our goal is not only to secure fair outcomes but to ensure that people are recognised as equal citizens with the right to be heard, respected, and treated with dignity throughout every step of the appeals journey.

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Positive Feedback

Side By Side Advocacy continues to get positive feedback. Some examples are:



‘David provided me very good service with high level professional knowledge and skill... He made complicate things into simple, easy efficient way to deal with. ‘



‘Thanks so much for our wonderful, enlightening phone call yesterday and this follow up advice. This has been the best and most helpful advice I have received thus far in the arduous and gruelling ART review process. I truly appreciate your commitment to your job - thanks a million!’



‘I’m writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable support throughout my daughter's NDIS Appeal in ART... You have gone above and beyond for my family. I always feel that I am well supported by you and I'm not alone in this fight. You have taken a lot of stress away and I would not have been able to come this far without you.’



Inclusive Governance Project

Dr Bernadette Curryer

The Inclusive Governance Project has continued to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in the decision-making and governance of community and disability-related organisations. We draw on the research findings of our study of the experience of people with intellectual disability as board members.

5 Principles of Inclusive Governance were identified and guide our work.
These principles are:

1

Inclusion of people with intellectual disability in the decision-making and governance of community organisations is valued.

2

There are clear pathways to Board membership for people with intellectual disability.

3

Board meetings and activities are accessible, meeting the inclusion needs of people with intellectual disability.

4

Individualised, skilled support is provided.

5

There is a commitment to making Inclusive Governance work.

Inclusive Governance

Continued

We are continuing to provide advice to disability organisations as they work towards a more inclusive model of governance. Increasing the involvement of people with intellectual disability in as many aspects of an organisation as possible is often the first step – this may be as organisational members, co-designers of programs and projects, employees, advisory group members, sub-committee members or board observers.

These experiences provide a chance for people to learn about governance processes while gaining a greater understanding of a specific organisation. Together with their lived experience of disability, these are important foundational skills for board membership.





Use the QR code to access resources on the Side By Side Advocacy website



Inclusive Governance

Continued

Resources to assist the implementation of inclusive governance have been developed. People with lived experience of intellectual disability have been involved , co-designing, making and promoting the resources. These resources are freely available on the Side By Side Advocacy website.

The resources include articles, videos and podcasts.

Highlights

We published an article about our findings:

An article explaining our research and findings was published in the Journal of Intellectual & Development Disability. This article is freely available.

We facilitated the Parramatta Action Group:

The aim of this group was to give people the experience of a group that used a formal meeting style (agenda, minutes, formal voting, executive roles). 11 people with intellectual disability joined the group and met fortnightly between February and June 2025. People had the opportunity to take on the roles of chair, secretary and treasurer at each meeting on a rotating basis. The group identified a lack of resources about how to make meetings accessible, so decided to make a video. Kristie, a university placement student edited the video.



Inclusive Governance

Continued

We co-hosted an inclusive governance event: From theory to action

This free event provided an overview of inclusive governance, project findings and resources available. This was held at Parramatta Library (Phive) on the 19th June. This event included presentations from the Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) and Sydney University's Centre for Disability Studies (CDS). 21 organisations booked to attend this event, with a total of 39 people in attendance.

We made conference presentations:

IASSIDD Conference:

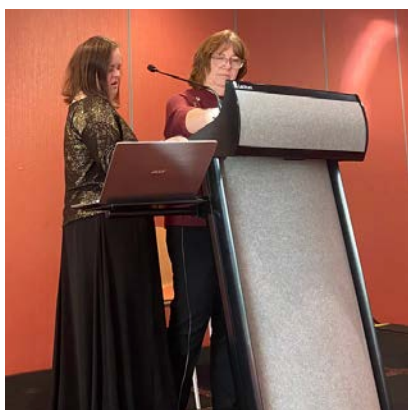
Chicago, August 2024. Bernadette presented while on annual leave.

Both a verbal and poster presentation were made. The verbal presentation was part of a symposium on decision-making in different contexts. The poster was awarded 'Best Poster Presentation' of the conference.

We took part in the ASID NSW Event: The Disability Royal Commission: One Year On

Sydney, November 2024

A presentation was made to explain the Commission's recommendations about inclusive governance.



Inclusive Governance

Continued

We appreciate the continued guidance from the Consultative Reference Group - Kim Roots (SBSA EO), Michelle Donelly (SBSA Board), Margaret Spencer (Sydney University), Ian Eddie (Excelsia College), Penny Pedersen (Ryde City Council), Nicole Lee (NSW Council for Intellectual Disability), and Shu-Hua Chan (self-advocate).

The funding was provided by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services (DSS). We have received a third 12-month funding extension, meaning the project will continue until the end of June 2026.



Use the above QR code to access the article explaining the Inclusive Governance Project's research findings

Community for Everyone

Project Team



Shu Hua Chan
Peer Leader



Jeff Lai
Peer Leader



Evelyn Gyan
Project Coordinator

Community for Everyone is a collaborative project led by Side By Side Advocacy in partnership with Hunter Circles. The project was created to respond to the isolation experienced by many people with intellectual disability by supporting the growth of genuine relationships and inclusive community participation.

At the heart of the project are volunteer Social Connectors, who are carefully matched with individuals with disability based on shared interests and values. These volunteers work thoughtfully and at the person's pace, helping to build friendships, strengthen confidence, and open doors to new experiences within community life.

Community for Everyone

Continued

A key feature of Community for Everyone is that it is led by people with intellectual disability. Peer Leaders have co-designed and co-delivered every stage of the project—from planning and promotion to training, events, and evaluation. Their lived experience, leadership, and insight ensure the project remains grounded, practical, and truly meaningful for the people it supports.

Over the year, more than 30 community-based events and training workshops were delivered across Parramatta, Newcastle, and surrounding areas. These sessions focused on recognising people's strengths, supporting individuals to plan a good life, fostering meaningful relationships, and making inclusive community connections. Every session was co-designed and co-facilitated by Peer Leaders, ensuring that lived experience was central to learning and practice.

To date, 20 people with intellectual disability have joined the project across Newcastle and the Ryde and Parramatta areas. These people are being matched with social connectors. These relationships have created opportunities for authentic friendship and belonging—whether that means joining a local knitting group, studying at TAFE, or attending morning teas and community gatherings.

The project also includes a robust and inclusive evaluation led by researchers from UNSW and Flinders University, including researchers with intellectual disability. The evaluation is co-designed and adapted to ensure accessibility for all participants. Monthly meetings with the research team, community storytelling, and reflective workshops are helping capture the project's impact and learnings. Oversight is provided by a Project Advisory Group that brings together people with disability, families, academics, and professionals. Peer Leaders are active contributors in every meeting and decision-making process.

Community engagement has been a major part of this work.

Community for Everyone

Continued

The project has delivered:

- Over 30 community information sessions and local outreach activities
- A targeted social media campaign to build awareness
- Radio interviews, news features, and an educational short film
- Collaboration with local councils, advocacy groups, and service providers
- Workshops with university students, community organisations, and faith groups

Through these activities, we have connected with a wide range of people and groups—garden clubs, community centres, neighbourhood houses, and local networks—encouraging them to welcome and include people with disability in everyday life.

The impact of this work is being felt at both personal and community levels. One participant who had been isolated for years now attends regular men's dinners at his local church. Another has taken the first step toward a long-held dream of studying at TAFE. Each story reflects the project's core purpose: to create space for relationships that grow naturally, with time, curiosity, and trust.



Community for Everyone

Continued

Community for Everyone is not just about reducing isolation—it is about creating a society where everyone is valued and has a place to belong. With the leadership of people with intellectual disability, the dedication of our partners, and the commitment of our volunteers, the project continues to show how inclusive communities are built—one relationship at a time.

Feedback has included:

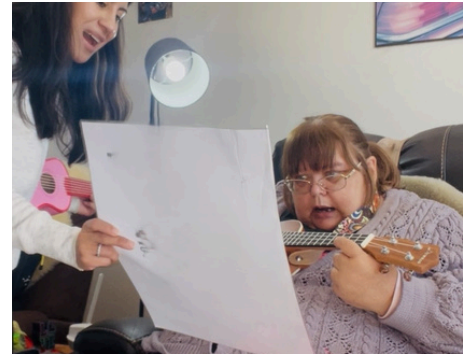


Thank you for hosting the induction workshop last Friday. It meant a lot to me, and hearing the stories from Shu Hua and Jeff resonated deeply. I truly appreciated the opportunity to be part of such a thoughtful and engaging discussion.'

'I wanted to thank you and Jen for organizing such an informative workshop. I would also like to thank Jeff, Shu Hua, and Rob for sharing their stories and giving us insight into their lives.'

'The workshop was well-structured and executed, and I found the resources ... shared to be extremely helpful. I learned a lot and have much to think about.'

'I am eagerly looking forward to attending future sessions.'



Thank you!

Many people and organisations have supported the work of Side By Side Advocacy during the year.

We want to extend our thanks for your generous contributions of time, money and other resources.

You helped us to achieve everything we did during the year.



Thank you to the Australian Government Department of Social Services (now the Department of Health, Disability and Aging) – that funded our core advocacy programs and projects

City of Parramatta Council – provided funding for the Parramatta Leadership Group and Hear My Voice projects

Southern Cross University – ongoing research collaborators in relation to the Inclusive Governance Project

A huge thank you to all of our dedicated and voluntary board members:

- Michelle Donelly - Chair
- Ben Pilipowski - Vice Chair
- Toni Ng - Treasurer
- Faz Hares - Secretary
- Coralie Jensen - Member
- Ruth Perram - Member
- Stephen MacDonald - Member
- Belinda Henry - Member

Social connectors and citizen advocates who strive for a community that is welcoming of all people

Thank you!

Roy McCormack assisted us with our set up in Parramatta

Danny Yang assisted us with technology

Clarice Wong who assisted us with communications

John Engler who assisted as part of Citizen Advocacy recruitment committee

Social Work Students from Excelsior University College and the University of Sydney contributed to our work:

- Lucia Ashton
- Ishika Shakya

Bachelor of Media and Communications students completed placements and contributed to our work:

- Jiawen Jia
- Kristie Tan

Project Advisory Group for the Community for Everyone Project (not including staff members) include:

- Dr Michelle Donelly (Board member SBSA and Southern Cross University)
- Dr Jo Watson (Board member – Hunter Circles and Deakin University)
- Dr Michelle King (University of Queensland)
- Dr Leighton Jay (parent of a man with intellectual disability with high support needs and NDIA Independent Advisory Council Member)

2RRR radio that featured Community for Everyone

All our anonymous donors

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

ABN 83 395 894 577

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AS AT 30 JUNE 2025**

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2025**

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Financial Report

MANAGEMENT DECLARATION

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

The Board of Management of Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated declare in their opinion:

- (a) The attached financial statements in respect of the year ended 30 June 2025 and notes thereto comply with accounting standards
- (b) The attached financial statements and notes thereto give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the association
- (c) The attached financial statements and notes thereto are in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2009
- (d) There are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due & payable.

This statement has been made in accordance with a resolution of the Management Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee.

Chairperson

22 October 2025

Treasurer

Parramatta

Auditors Independence Declaration

To the Executive of the Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the financial year ended 30 June 2025 there have been:

- (a) No contraventions of the auditors independence requirements as set out in the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to the audit; and
- (b) No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Stephen Sproats
Registered Company Auditor
7/288 Newline Road Dural

22 October 2025

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED		
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025		
	2025	2024
REVENUE		
Commonwealth Grants Program	1,110,421	779,801
Other Grant	23,159	24,813
Membership	-	10
Other Income	850	540
Interest	18,793	17,211
TOTAL REVENUE	1,153,223	822,375
EXPENDITURE		
Asset<2,000	7,488	7,833
Audit Fee	3,500	3,500
Cleaning	2,384	2,304
Computer	8,385	6,179
Contractors	30,000	-
Depreciation	5,308	11,157
Electricity	1,947	1,528
General	5,706	4,420
Insurances	8,302	8,360
Memberships	1,664	1,515
Printing, Stationery & Postages	6,895	4,001
Project Partner	205,602	-
Provision for Employee Leave	74,059	68,754
Quality Assurance	9,740	6,911
Recruitment Costs	1,034	2,093
Rent	37,565	36,406
Repairs & Maintenance	680	500
Salaries & Wages	609,232	542,033
Superannuation	80,510	69,642
Telephone & Internet	7,838	7,797
Training	1,737	1,824
Travel & Accommodation	6,308	6,837
Video & Resource creation	6,800	8,038
Workers Compensation	3,060	2,591
Workshop & Seminars	7,656	3,258
	1,133,560	806,480
SURPLUS	19,643	15,895
NET SURPLUS FOR YEAR	19,643	15,895
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR YEAR	\$ 19,643	\$ 15,895

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED		
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025		
	2025	2024
ACCUMULATED FUNDS	\$ 266,817	\$ 247,174
Represented by:-		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash on Hand	0	0
Cash at Bank	535,519	414,877
Prepayments	16,545	6,824
Sundry Debtors	7,465	8,571
Rental Bond	12,000	12,000
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	571,529	442,072
FIXED ASSETS		
Office Resources - at cost	40,194	40,194
Accumulated Depreciation	-30,442	-25,135
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	9,752	15,059
TOTAL ASSETS	581,281	457,131
Trade Creditors (Note 7)	85,930	53,606
Grants in Advance (Note 8)	142,749	88,947
Provision for Employee Entitlements (Note 9)	85,785	69,404
TOTAL LIABILITIES	314,464	209,957
NET ASSETS	\$ 266,817	\$ 247,174

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2025

Balance at 30 June 2023	231,279
Net Surplus	15,895
Other comprehensive income	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	15,895
Balance at 30 June 2024	247,174
Net Surplus	19,643
Other comprehensive income	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	19,643
Balance at 30 June 2025	\$ 266,817

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED		
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2025		
	2025	2024
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Receipts from Funding Bodies & Clients	1,209,025	822,375
Payments to suppliers and employees	1,086,383	839,410
Net Cash inflow from Operating Activities	<u>120,642</u>	<u>-17,035</u>
Net Cash outflow from Equipment Purchases	0	-5,553
Net Increase (Decrease) in cash held	120,642	-22,588
Cash at beginning of year	414,877	437,465
Cash at End of Financial Year	<u>\$ 535,519</u>	<u>\$ 414,877</u>
Reconciliation of Operating Surplus after tax to Net Cash Inflow From Operations		
Operating Surplus After Income Tax	19,643	15,895
Depreciation & Loss on Disposal	5,308	11,157
Sundry Debtors	1,105	-840
Prepayments	-9,921	75
Creditors	32,324	17,764
Grants in Advance	55,802	-36,579
Provision for Employee Benefits	16,381	-24,507
	<u>\$ 120,642</u>	<u>-\$ 17,035</u>

Financial Report

SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

1. Corporate Information

Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated operates under the Association Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW). Its business premises are located in Parramatta & operates across Greater Sydney.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

a) Basis of Preparation

This general purpose financial report has been prepared in accordance with Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW), Australian Accounting Standards and other authoritative pronouncements of the AASB & Urgent Issues group Interpretations. The financial report has been prepared on the basis of historical cost and does not take into consideration changing values of money or current valuations of non-current assets. Cost is based on the fair values of the consideration given in exchange for assets.

b) Significant accounting judgments, estimates & assumptions

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates & assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets, liabilities, income & expenses. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the results of which form the basis of making judgments. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates & underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current & future periods.

c) Revenue Recognition

Revenue is recognised when the association is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy and is net of GST

d) Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category

e) Cash

Cash & Cash equivalents in the balance sheet comprise cash at bank and in hand and in short term deposits are stated at their nominal value

f) Trade Debtors

Trade Debtors are stated at original invoice amount less any Provision for doubtful debts where applicable. Normal trading terms are 7 to 30 days

g) Plant & Equipment

Fixed assets are depreciated over the expected useful life on a prime cost basis.

h) Grants in Advance

Grants in Advance are carried forward at their original amount and are to be provided subsequent to the balance date

i) Employee Leave

The liability for Annual & Long Service Leave is recognised and measured at the amount expected to be paid when liabilities are settled

j) Provisions

These are recognised when there is a present obligation as a result of past funding and it is probable that an outflow will be required using reasonable estimates

k) Government Grants

Grants are recognised in accordance with program, project and funding body requirements

Financial Report

	2025	2024
4. Contingent Liabilities	\$nil	\$nil
5. Capital Expenditure Commitments	\$nil	\$nil
6. Segment Information		
The association operates predominantly in one industry, as it acts as sponsors for Government funded projects. The company operates in one geographical region, being Sydney, NSW		
7. Trade Creditors		
GST & PAYG	20,104	10,738
Accrued Expenses	43,946	23,523
Superannuation Payable	10,881	9,749
Trade Creditors	<u>11,019</u>	<u>9,599</u>
	<u>\$85,930</u>	<u>\$53,606</u>
8. Grants in Advance		

	Commonwealth Government Grants by Program				Other Grants	Total Grants
	National Disability Advocacy	NDIS Appeals	Inclusive Governance	Community for Everyone		
Grants Brought Forward	14,808	14,498	0	42,898	14,743	86,947
Grants Received	464,442	155,361	115,655	434,280	19,634	1,189,382
Grants Expenses	(483,580)	(156,091)	(105,864)	(384,886)	(23,159)	(1,133,580)
Grants Carried Forward	\$ 15,670	\$ 13,676	\$ 9,791	\$ 92,302	\$ 11,218	\$ 142,749

9. Employee Entitlements		
Provision for Annual Leave	48,123	51,460
Provision for Long Service Leave	<u>37,662</u>	<u>17,954</u>
	<u>\$85,785</u>	<u>\$69,404</u>

Financial Report

STEPHEN A. SPROATS



ACCOUNTANT

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT TO MEMBERS OF SIDE BY SIDE ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial statement of Side by Side Advocacy Incorporated which comprises the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Comprehensive Income and Cash flow statement for the year ended on that date, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and the executive assertion statement.

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statement of Side by Side Advocacy Incorporated is in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2009, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the associations financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended on that date; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and Associations Incorporation Act 2009.

Basis for opinion

I conducted the audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Auditors responsibilities for the Audit of the financial statement' section of my report.

I am independent of the association in accordance with the ethic requirements of the Accounting Professional & Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the code.

I believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Responsibilities of the Responsible Entities for the Financial Statement

The management of the Incorporated Association are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the Associations Incorporations Act 2009, and for such internal control as the management determine is necessary to enable the presentation of the financial report that is free of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the responsible persons are responsible for assessing the association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible persons either intend to liquidate the association or to cease operations or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the associations financial reporting process.

Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement

My objective is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material, if, individually or in aggregate, they could be reasonably be expected to influence the economic users taken on the basis of this report.

Financial Report

STEPHEN A. SPROATS



ACCOUNTANT

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As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery intentional omissions misrepresentations or the override of internal control
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstance, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures by the responsible persons.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the responsible persons' use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the association ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in the Auditors report to the related disclosures in the financial statement or if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of the audit report. However, future events or conditions may cause the association to cease as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statement, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statement presents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the responsible persons regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during the audit. effectiveness of the association's internal control

Stephen A Sproats
Registered Company Auditor 3932

Dural
22 October 2025

Where to find us



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