



side by side advocacy

Your introduction to Side By Side Advocacy

Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated

Level 2, Suite 206, 34 Charles Street, Parramatta, NSW, 2150

Phone: 02 9808 5500

Email: info@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

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What information is in this handbook?

This handbook contains information about Side By Side Advocacy. It is for people with disability who are receiving advocacy.

It says what work we do and how we do it.

It tells you what your rights and responsibilities are when you are working with an advocate.

It also talks about how

- we keep your information private
- you can provide feedback including complaints.

What does Side By Side Advocacy do?

Side By Side Advocacy provides advocacy for people with disability. We specialise in advocacy for people with intellectual disability.

We are committed to inclusion. We are researching how people with intellectual disability can be included as members of management committees and boards.

We speak up about issues that matter to people with disability.



What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is taking action to bring about change.

That change may be protecting your rights, needs or interests. The change may be taking action to bring about positive change.

Advocates are on the side of the person with disability.

We are independent of services. We do not charge money for advocacy.



Who do we support?

- **Citizen Advocacy** matches people with intellectual disability and local citizens in the Ryde and Hunters Hill Local Government Areas
- **Individual Advocacy** is available to people with disability in the northern suburbs of Sydney and in Parramatta and Cumberland LGAs.
- **NDIS Appeals Support** is available to people with disability in Greater Sydney.
- **Supported Employment Advocacy Project** is available across NSW.

If Side By Side Advocacy does not provide the advocacy you need in your area, we can let you know who does.

What can an advocate do?

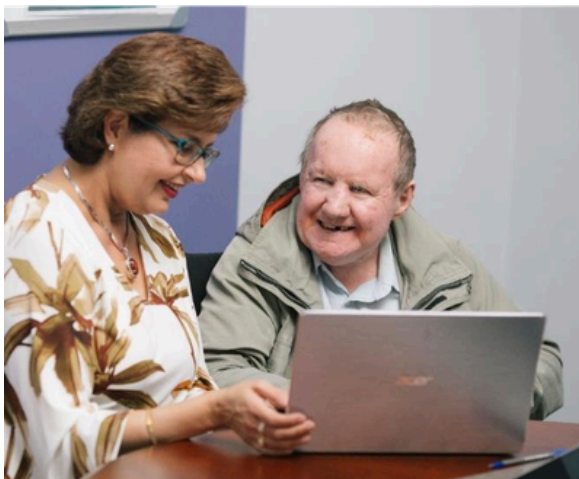
What an advocate does depends on what you need and what your circumstances are.

The advocate will listen to you to find out what you want to do. They will discuss ideas for taking action.

An advocate can

- Support you to speak up for yourself
- Speak on your behalf
- Help someone you know to speak up for you, like a family member or a friend
- Help you write letters and make phone calls
- Help you make decisions
- Give you information that makes it easier to make choices
- Refer you to other services that can help you
- Help you identify what your strengths, skills and supports are
- Help you make a complaint.

If you are not sure if an advocate can help with an issue you have, you can ask them.



What can advocates not do?

There are some things advocates at Side By Side Advocacy do not do. This includes

- Giving legal advice
- Providing counselling or therapy
- Acting as a friend, mediator or legal decision maker
- Providing advocacy when there is a more appropriate service or organisation that could help you. If there is a more appropriate service or organisation we will let you know.

What are your rights at Side By Side Advocacy?

When you access advocacy, you have the right to

- Be treated fairly by Side By Side Advocacy
- Be respected and treated with courtesy
- Make decisions about your advocacy plan, about what goals you work towards and about how you work together with your advocate and others
- Have your opinions, preferences and choices respected
- Be updated about what we are doing to address your issues
- Speak with your advocate with or without a support person present
- Privacy and confidentiality. Your personal information will not be provided to anyone outside Side By Side Advocacy without your permission
- Look at the information we keep about you (unless there is a legal exception)
- Have access to information in the way that works best for you
- Give feedback
- Make a complaint. We will deal with your complaints fairly and in a reasonable time. You will not get less support if you make a complaint.

What are your responsibilities?

When you access advocacy, you have the responsibility to

- Treat the people at Side By Side Advocacy with respect. Side By Side Advocacy has a zero tolerance for abuse, violence or threatening behaviour. If you need support managing emotions, let us know how we can support you
- Provide all relevant information that relates to your advocacy issue. If you choose not to share some information with the advocate, it might be harder for the advocate to help you, or they might not be able to help you
- Take responsibility for your decisions that you make about your advocacy
- Assist with your advocacy issues as much as you are able to
- Do the things you say you will do, or let us know if you cannot
- Understand that advocates try to do what you ask them to, but that they cannot do things that are illegal or that may cause harm to you or others
- Tell us if you need to change an appointment
- Make sure your home is safe if your advocate is visiting you at home
- Understand that advocates have to help people with disability who are not safe first. This can mean that the advocate might have to change plans with you or may not be able to help with an extra issue.



How is your personal information protected?

In Australia, there are laws that protect your privacy. Side By Side Advocacy follows these laws.

If you want to find out more about how we protect your privacy, you can ask us to explain it to you. We can also give you a document called privacy policy that tells you about how we protect your privacy.

Feedback and complaints

We want to know what you think. There are lots of ways you can tell us.

How can you give us feedback?

Feedback can be positive, negative – or just letting us know about something.

You can give us feedback if you would like to tell us if we are doing a good job, if you have a suggestion about how we do things, or if we are not doing a good job. Feedback helps us know if we are doing a good job and if there is anything we can do better.

You can give feedback in a way that works best for you. This can include

- Telling your advocate
- Calling the office
- Sending a letter or an email to the office
- Completing a feedback form on paper or on the website
- Telling the Executive Officer or a Board member.



A feedback form is made available when you start advocacy.

There is an email address you can use if you would like to provide feedback of any kind. This could be a compliment, a suggestion, feedback or a complaint.

The email address is feedback@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

You can also ring the office to provide feedback on 02 9808 5500

Making complaints

You have the right to make a complaint. We will take your concern seriously and try to find a solution. We will not treat you differently because you have made a complaint.

It is okay to make a complaint about Side By Side Advocacy if you think that

- We did not treat you well
- We did not do our job well
- The organisation is not run well.

If you make a complaint

- We will listen to you and take you seriously
- We can show you how to make a complaint
- We will keep your complaint private
- We will try to solve the problem and if we cannot, we will tell you about other organisations who may be able to help you.

We will always treat you fairly and with respect – making a complaint will not change this.

Ask us if you would like a copy of our complaints policy.

How you can make a complaint

There are lots of ways to let us know about your concerns.

You could start by talking to the person who the complaint is about and try to solve the problem yourself. It is ok to have someone with you.

You can talk to someone else if

- You don't feel comfortable talking to the person yourself
- You already tried solving the problem by yourself and it didn't work.

Who else can you talk to?

If the problem is about a member of staff, you can talk to Kim Roots, the Executive Officer.

If the problem is about Kim Roots the Executive Officer, you can talk to Michelle Donnelly, the Chair of the Board.

If you have other problems, you can talk to the Board of Management.

Your complaint will be looked at based on our rules. It will either be looked at by Kim Roots, the Executive Officer, or by a small group that is formed by the Board.

We will make a decision about what to do about your complaint. We will tell you about the decision and how we made the decision.

Executive Officer – Kim Roots
Phone: 9808 5500
Email: eo@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

Chair of Board – Michelle Donnelly
Phone: 9808 5500 and leave a message for Michelle
Email: board@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

You can write a letter to the Board of Management at this address

Board of Management
Side By Side Advocacy
Level 2, Suite 206
34 Charles Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

You could also fill out a feedback form and email it to

feedback@sidebysideadvocacy.org.au

What if I am not happy with the decision?

If you are not happy with the decision about your complaint, you can ask for someone outside the organisation to look at the problem. This person is called a conciliator.

If you are still not happy, you can talk to another organisation that helps with complaints.

Contact information for other organisations

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

This is a free service for people with disability who use advocacy organisations

Phone: 1800 880 052

Department of Social Services Complaints Line

This is a Government funded service managed by the Department of Social Services where you can complain about advocacy organisations

Phone: 1800 634 035

Intellectual Disability Rights Service

DRS is a free service for people with intellectual or other cognitive impairment

Phone: 1300 665 908

Getting more involved with Side By Side Advocacy

As well as getting help with advocacy, there are lots of ways you can get more involved with Side By Side Advocacy.

Some easy ways are

- Coming to events
- Getting our newsletter.

Let us know if you would like to get more involved with Side By Side Advocacy.

We can discuss what could be possible.



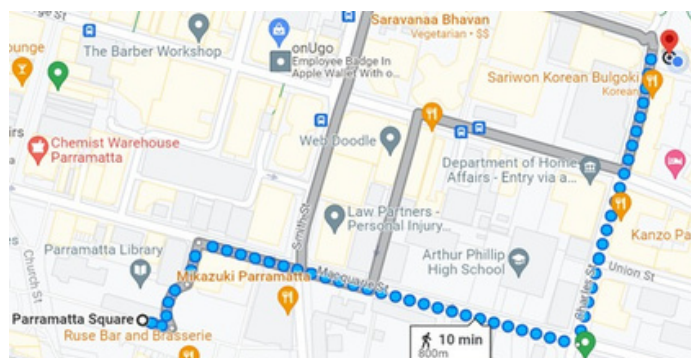
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