

citizen advocacy protects the rights needs and interests of people with intellectual disability by connecting them in one-to-one freely given relationships with local citizens a citizen Advocate is an unpaid person who connects with a person with intellectual disability who's at risk of social isolation and exclusion these matches often last a very long time sometimes they last a lifetime my name is de mayo and I'm the citizen advocacy coordinator at side by-side advocacy citizen advocacy is quite different from

other forms of advocacy largely because the advocate is unpaid they make a choice to be in the person's life the person the life of the person with disability and um the the goal of Citizen advocacy is to establish one-on-one unpaid long-term relationships so it's very much in an independent relationship it's like any other relationship between families or friends and it has that advocacy component built in as well where you've got some support from the office to ensure that it's not just a friend it's

more than a friendship citizen advocacy has the potential to help change Community attitudes to bring about a greater understanding of the life experiences of people with intellectual disability to provide safeguards for a vulnerable person and to really bring about positive change in the life of a person with intellectual disability I became a citizen Advocate because I had a very good friend who was telling me about her role as a citizen Advocate and I thought it was something that I would be very happy to

do and that I could probably do with it I could do it and I thought it was something that was really important citizen advocacy is so important because many people with intellectual disability have very few opportunities to make decisions and have choices in their own life some people don't have a choice about where they live who they live with who comes and goes from their home the people who are providing them with support they may not even have an opportunity to choose what they eat they may be experiencing abuse

neglect exploitation my name is Janette and I'm one of the citizen advocates for side-by-side advocacy I think the role of Citizen Advocate has um a number of aspects the first one and I think the most most important is to just be a friend um because there's a different dynamic between people who turn up just to be a friend to go out somewhere to just spend time together than someone who turns up to go to work that feels different and the other thing I think is just uh being someone who is in contact with that

person and so keeping an eye on what goes on uh so if something happens that's not that's UNT The Advocate is someone who can say now how how come that happened why has that happened uh and then the people working with them are aware that someone is keeping an eye on things it's not meant to be threatening at all it's just I'm aware citizen advocacy I

think is really important because it's one of the few organizations that tries to view situations from the point of view of the

person with the disability so the idea is not to look at the big picture so much but to see what's happening to this person and is that reasonable is that the best thing for this person uh there are lots of organizations that work to increase the funding for this or the facilities for that very admirable very important but it's really important to line up with a person and try and find out what does that person need and it might be some fancy piece of equipment or it might just be let's go out every

couple of weeks and do fun stuff let's go for a ferry ride let's go to a football game let's go to a movie it's a very individualized perspective and I think that's rare in in our social system but really really useful citizen advocacy is a movement that's um around the world and um you know still quite strong in Australia currently there are more people with intellectual disability who are really Keen to be matched with a citizen Advocate then there are citizen Advocates available for those matches

and that's a real shame and we really want to change that if you're interested in learning more about citizen advocacy perhaps you want to be a citizen Advocate or you think that you may know others who would be interested we'd really love to hear from you we're very open to coming out and speaking to you or to your community group just so you get more information about how citizen advocacy can make a difference to a person with intellectual disability and make the community that you're

living in more inclusive for everybody I would say it's the most rewarding thing you can do and have a [Music] go [Music]