

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy

**Handbook for
advocates**

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CONTENTS

Welcome 3

What is Citizen Advocacy? 3

The Initial Stages of Your Relationship 3

Why is There a Need for Citizen Advocacy? 4

What is Intellectual Disability? 5

What is Multiple Disability? 5

What Do Citizen Advocates Do? 6

Social Role Valorisation - A Brief Introduction 6

Rights of People with Intellectual Disability 8

What does the Citizen Advocacy Program Ask of Advocates? 10

What Does the Citizen Advocacy Office Offer Advocates? 10

Where Do I Go for Information? 11

Citizen Advocacy Principles 12

Confidentiality 13

Grievance Procedure 14

Glossary of Citizen Advocacy Terms 18

Acknowledgments and References 18

Welcome

Welcome to Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Inc. and good luck in the relationship that you are about to begin. As with all relationships there are bound to be highs and lows, good times and bad times.

That's what makes it all worthwhile.

This Handbook will provide you with a basic introduction to Citizen Advocacy, and contains information that we hope will be useful to you in your Citizen Advocacy relationship. It will also raise some issues which will be important for you to consider in your relationship.

It is always worthwhile taking the time to consider the importance of your contribution towards another person by becoming a Citizen Advocate.

Citizen Advocacy is a movement which seeks to promote, protect and defend the rights and dignity of people with intellectual or multiple disability. It is an important and powerful response from ordinary people to ensure that the rights and interests of people who have intellectual disability are acknowledged, understood, responded to and defended.

To be involved in this movement, to give of yourself to another person, is very fulfilling and something to take pride in.

What is Citizen Advocacy?

Citizen Advocacy calls for the establishment and support of a one-to-one relationship between a person who has disability, who has unmet needs in one or more major life areas; and a resourceful and principled person, who is free from conflict of interest and who makes a personal, voluntary commitment to provide some of the emotional and/or material support required for his or her Protege.

Citizen Advocates are usually recruited by a Citizen Advocacy Program which is also free from conflict of interests. They participate in an orientation process and are matched with a person who has an intellectual disability. Advocates are also provided substantial support by the Citizen Advocacy Program as their relationship develops.

The nature of each Citizen Advocacy relationship is unique and is based upon the needs of the person with intellectual disability and the Advocate's capacity to meet these needs. The two people in the relationship together decide the terms and conditions of their relationship, bearing in mind the needs of the person with disability. The scope of Citizen Advocacy relationships may be as diverse and different as the individuals involved in them.

The Initial Stages of Your Relationship

In the initial stages of most relationships, each Advocate and Protege will need to take some

time to get to know each other and to establish trust and respect. For the Advocate, there will be a growing awareness of the life the Protege leads and their needs and aspirations. This awareness will help each Advocate to decide what opportunities they can offer their Protege to help them to meet some of their needs and goals. Often these opportunities can be very ordinary things that most people take for granted, such as making everyday choices. For example: choosing to wake up when you want to, not when someone orders you to; or choosing to go for a walk outside when you want to instead of when you are told to.

Make sure that you have your Protege's address and telephone number and that you have given yours in return.

Don't underestimate your Protege's abilities, and don't over-protect him or her. It is appropriate to occasionally offer challenges. Normal risks are part of everyday life and people with disability are entitled to experience challenges.

Why is There a Need for Citizen Advocacy?

Either as a result of the person's disability itself, or as is more often the case, as a result of the negative ways society responds to the person's disability, people with intellectual disability or multiple disability are one of the most significantly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups within our community.

The nature and degree of the person's disability itself may mean that he or she faces significant practical difficulties in dealing with the demands of every day life.

The way society responds to the person's disability may mean that the person;

- * is rejected by the community, and sometimes even by their family and service workers.
- * is seen to be 'less important' or to have lower status than other people in the community.
- * is isolated and sometimes also segregated from ordinary community life.
- * is not taken seriously and, consequently, many opportunities for growth and development are squandered and ignored.
- * is often materially poor and therefore extremely vulnerable financially.
- * is provided with few or no opportunities to have control over their life, including the right to exercise basic freedoms other people take for granted.
- * is not recognised as a unique individual with human needs and aspirations.
- * is prevented from participating in enriching life experiences.
- * is particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination .

- * is often abused and neglected - physically, emotionally and socially.

- * is often restricted to relating only to those paid to 'be there' and usually these people move on after a short time.

- * is often deprived of supporters, allies and defenders.

In some instances, people with intellectual disability are able to minimise or even overcome this disadvantage and vulnerability by developing their own personal resources, or by relying on the support of family and friends.

Many more people, however, have a few or no personal resources, family members or support mechanisms which can be mobilised to meet their needs.

Professional support services may assist the person, but even the best professional services are only able to meet the practical and material needs of the person, whose emotional needs are usually very poorly understood and are therefore neglected.

In some instances, professional services for people with disability, by virtue of their structure and approach, perpetuate negative social attitudes about the people they 'serve' and therefore contribute to - rather than alleviate - many of the disadvantages experienced by these people.

Citizen Advocacy is one way to reverse some of the deprivation and vulnerability experienced by many people with intellectual disability. Citizen Advocacy possesses the potential to:

- * increases the social status of people who have disability

- * create acceptance and inclusion through freely given relationships.

- * provides continuity through long-term relationships.

- * create a wide range of positive experiences.

- * increases control and power in the person's life.

- * safe-guard the person from exploitation and neglect.

- * changes community attitudes and promote understanding of the issues facing people who have intellectual or multiple disability.

What is Intellectual Disability?

Intellectual disability is a term which describes a large variety of conditions which may be either apparent at birth, or acquired or become apparent through the 'developmental period' from birth to eighteen years of age. While the precise causes of intellectual disability are not well understood, it is generally believed to arise from some forms of genetic or

environmental trauma.

Essentially, intellectual disability is an impairment in the areas of intelligence, perception, personality and volition. Even though people who have intellectual disability can - and do - grow and develop throughout the course of their lifetime, these impairments are life-long and have a significant impact upon the person's capacity to adapt to the world.

Sometimes the conditions which give rise to the person's intellectual disability may also affect his or her physical characteristics. For instance, their facial appearance and stature may be affected. But generally speaking, people with intellectual disability are not visibly different from people who do not have a disability.

What is Multiple Disability?

Multiple disability is a term which describes a situation where a person has more than one kind of impairment. These impairments may include cerebral palsy, spina bifida, blindness or deafness.

The degree to which a person is disadvantaged by the nature of their disability depends greatly upon the degree to which they are impaired; the nature and extent of any further medical, emotional, behavioural or communication difficulties they may experience; the extent of the personal and material supports to which they have access; and their capacity to overcome or compensate for the limitations arising from their impairment.

What Do Citizen Advocates Do?

The range of what a Citizen Advocate may do for - and with - their Proteges is endless. They may:

- * assist their protege to grow and develop their skills, abilities, image and status by challenging their potential and the low expectations and stereotypes which they may have been subjected.
- * introduce their Protege to new experiences, resources and networks within the community.
- * act as a guide, mentor or assistant to their Protege as they encounter challenges and difficulties in their life.
- * speak out for their Protege's welfare and interest.
- * make sure that their Protege's life is taken seriously by the people and services who have responsibility.
- * ensure that the person's right to make choices and decisions which effect their life is recognised, encouraged, developed and respected.

Social Role Valorisation - A Brief Introduction

Special problems begin for people with intellectual disability when members from the community see them as being different from other people in an undesirable way. Some people differ in ways which are seen positively. For example, a medal winning athlete is held in high regard for their fitness and agility.

Other people's 'difference', may be viewed negatively. For example, a person with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair and may have difficulty eating.

It is likely that the star athlete will be welcomed and positively valued. The person with cerebral palsy, however, is likely to be rejected, negatively valued and cast into a lower status role, along with others with similar disability. This in turn will effect the way these people are responded to.

This process, known as 'devaluing' is experienced by many individuals and groups. For example people who have intellectual disability often are thought of as objects of pity or charity or as being sick. Adults are often treated like children and treated as objects of ridicule.

Devaluing is largely an unconscious reaction to people who we see as unacceptably different to ourselves and is something that is done to a person, it is not something that is within a person. So, devaluing can be overcome.

When a person is devalued they are likely to be treated in ways which diminish their dignity, development, competence, health and financial security. They are also likely to be rejected and persecuted. And this will usually will affect the way the devalued person behaves.

Most people act or behave the way they are expected to. So if a person is cast into a lower social role (e.g. as an object of ridicule) they are likely to live down to the expectations of that role and, more often than not, behave in ways that are not valued. Consequently, vicious cycles of expectation/behaviour often take over.

The key to change lives by attributing socially valued roles to the person who has been devalued. People who take on valued roles (e.g. teacher, tax-payer, neighbour, employee) are unlikely to be rejected, especially if they fill several or many roles at once. Consider the number of socially valued roles that you fill and the high expectations associated with those roles.

Helping a person who has been devalued to find or keep a valued social role is one of the most significant and important goals of any Citizen Advocate. For example, a Protege who lives in a group home may, with the support and encouragement of his or her Advocate, join a local football team - they will take on the highly valued roles of sportsman and team-mate.

Consider what will enable your Protege to be accepted by others as well as what it is that may mean they won't be accepted. For example, it is unlikely your Protege will be accepted if he or she goes to a job interview dressed shabbily and unfashionably. Whereas if care is taken so that they arrive dressed in neat, clean, fashionable clothes, they may be accepted. Similarly, a 55 year old person dressed in childish clothes is unlikely to be accepted into a retired

businessmen's social club.

Also, consider encouraging your Protege to become efficient in activities that will be positively valued and will improve their chance of others seeing them in socially valued roles. For example, encouraging them to improve his or her conversational skills may be really valuable in finding a job. Or helping them to learn how to cook may be instrumental in being regarded as a potential flat-mate.

The community's view of a person can be changed by applying several guide-lines:

Expectations. We all usually do what is expected of us, if we are expected to achieve, we usually will. Similarly if we are expected to fail we, probably will. Remember that many people with intellectual disability have always been expected to fail! The high expectations you have for your Protege will pay off!

Growth. All people can learn, change and improve. People learn best with materials and activities that are relevant to real life; adequate time; good instructors; and real reasons to learn. Learning involves taking risks.

Role Models. Imitation is one of the best and most powerful ways to learn both good and bad behaviour and skills. People with intellectual disability need good role models in their lives and they need to be able to identify closely with them.

Remember that people with socially valued roles usually get access to the good things in life - such as a home and financial security - through increased opportunities provided by others and by themselves. One of our goals, then should be to bend over backwards or do everything possible to increase the likelihood that a person who has been devalued will be valued by the community and avoid doing anything that will perhaps further devalue or hurt the person.

'Bending Over Backwards'. We must make extra efforts to help make up for the many ways devalued people have been hurt. Your Protege may have been significantly hurt throughout his or her life and may be extremely vulnerable. As well, he or she may be hurt in the future by things that may not hurt a valued person.

Community Participation. The best place to learn something new is in the place it is usually done. For a person with disability to learn how to live in the community they need to live there and, with support, to become part of that community. People should use services that valued people use. For example a child with cerebral palsy may need special support and use a communication board but this should be at a local primary school, being part of the valued school life will help the child to develop.

About the community. For community attitudes to change, we need to have good experiences with devalued people, otherwise old stereotypes will persist.

As an Advocate you may have to work at making interactions between your Protege and others as constructive as possible. As well, the image that your Protege presents should be positive. Negative images of people who have been devalued encourage others to put them into low-status roles instead of valued ones.

They are many images that reflect upon people who have been devalued:

* staff who refer people as ‘spastics or “Down Syndromes” send a message that these people are not individuals but ailments.

* a school bus marked with the sign ‘ambulance’ conveys a strong message that the students in the bus are medically sick;

* a Nursing Home located beside a municipal dump or in a disused funeral parlour conveys multiple images of waste, garbage, sickness and decay.

All these images create problems for people who already experience tremendous difficulty with being accepted.

The images presented by people who have been devalued should be appropriate to their age, as appearance affects self image and the view community has of these people.

Remember that images are conveyed in many ways, for example:

- * the company people keep
- * where people live
- * what people do
- * appearance
- * habits and mannerisms
- * labels

Conclusion

Together, these ideas form the basis of the theory of Social Role Valorisation.

Rights of People with Intellectual Disability

Many people are surprised when they learn that *all* people with intellectual disability have rights! Indeed, these are the same fundamental human rights that all Australians have and frequently call to the fore when injustice emerges. The issue of rights not only arise in crisis but continually in our day to day lives. Many privileges that we take for granted are our ‘rights-in -action such as: going to the toilet when you want to; not eating apples if you don’t like them; entertaining friends in your own home; using the telephone; or receiving the correct medical treatment.

Many people with intellectual disability have their fundamental human rights systematically denied or other wise forgotten by the many people who wrongly believe that no - or different - rights apply. Occasionally, a persons capacity to independently exercise their rights may be lawfully restricted through a Guardianship Order. The Guardian should, however, act on the persons behalf to ensure that their rights are enforced and respected.

- * People with intellectual disability have the right to education, training, guidance and support. All people have the right to an environment that will enable them to maximise their abilities and potential.

* People with intellectual disability have the right to receive appropriate medical care, including physical treatment, therapy and specialist aids. Importantly, people have the right to give or refuse consent to their own medical treatment. When a person may not be able to give informed consent they have the right to continue to receive health care with the consent a legally recognised person.

* People with intellectual disability have the right to live with their family or to live in their own homes with the people of their choice. *All* people have the right to have their cultural background respected and to speak in their own language.

* People with intellectual disability have the right to participate in all aspects of community life, to work, to vote, to be member of a club, to choose relationships.

* People with intellectual disability have the right to be free from exploitation, neglect and abuse and to be free from discriminatory and degrading treatment.

There are so many rights that it would be impossible to include them here. The few mentioned above arise because of the particular vulnerability experienced by people with intellectual disability. As a Citizen Advocate, you will be encouraged and assisting one person to exercise perhaps the most fundamental right - to be able to choose!

Saying 'yes' or 'no' - and being heard - will make an enormous difference in a Protege's life.

For example, saying 'no' to being waken at 6.00 am on the weekend and having someone hear and take action to stop such intrusions enables a person to exercise their right to privacy and personal freedom.

As a Citizen Advocate, you can take a special role in protecting your Protege's rights. You can do this by listening to your Protege's requests and statements and acting upon them. If you became aware that your Protege is subject to physical abuse, you have an obligation to speak and/or act on their behalf to prevent the continuation of the abuse.

For many Advocates, your day to day experiences with your Protege will enhance the community's respect for the rights of people with intellectual disability.

A day spent with your Protege visiting the Powerhouse museum, for example, or utilising public transport makes a statement to the community that people with intellectual disability have the right to use and have access to public facilities.

If, at any time, you feel that the rights of your Protege are being abused, contact this Citizen Advocacy Office immediately. The staff have access to legal advisers and many other resources. Advocates have a responsibility to ensure that the rights of their Protege are not violated.

Many rights of people with a disability are clearly recognised in State and Federal Legislation and International documents including:

- The Discrimination and Guardianship Act, 1987. (NSW)
- Anti Discrimination Act 1977. (NSW)
- Disability Services Act 1986 (CTH)

- Children Services Section Act, 1987. (NSW)
- Declaration of the Rights of the Mentally Retarded.(United Nations)

A clear statement of the rights of people with disability is found in the Principle and Objectives of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act state, which states:

the freedom to decision and freedom of action of such persons to be restricted as little as possible; that such persons should be encouraged, as far as possible, live a normal life in the community.....

What Does the Citizen Advocacy Program Ask of Advocates?

As a Citizen Advocate, you are responsible to your Protege, the office is here to support your relationship and you are encouraged to keep in contact. But you are not responsible to the office, you are responsible to your Protege.

These are a few areas in which we ask you to take responsibility:

1. In keeping a commitment you make to your Protege.
2. To keep in touch with the office every two to three weeks (at first) or once a month to keep the office posted on what is happening. You can ring us at any time or tell us a time that is convenient for us to contact you.
3. Contact the office ASAP if you are moving or changing your situation.
4. To maintain contact with us and let us know if there is any extra support that we can offer. We are anxious to help you with any problems you may encounter in your relationship.
5. To keep a diary - if possible - of activities undertaken together such as social events; meetings with service personnel and changes in your Protege's life. There are several reasons we suggest this: so that you can look back and share with others your experiences together and the progress in your relationship. The information you keep in your diary will be invaluable in ensuring positive action to solve problems in the future.
6. To join in, with your Protege, in evaluations of our program which will enable us to know whether the program is meeting you and your Protege's needs. This will also enable us to determine ways in which we can improve the services and infrastructure of Citizen Advocacy.

What Does the Citizen Advocacy Office Offer Advocates?

Personal Support and Follow Along

The office can be a good source of support. We will maintain frequent contact in the initial stages of your relationship. You are encouraged to contact us any time for information,

advice or just to share your experiences. The office can assist you to understand the individual needs of your Protege and may at times make suggestions to help you.

The office can provide significant support when you are having difficulties in your relationship. It is always useful to talk over issues and problems with other people and usually together it is easier to work out a resolution together. We can put you in touch with other Advocates who may have experienced similar concerns or problems and can share their experience with you. Or an Advocate Associate who has the specialised knowledge or skills you seek in dealing with your concern.

Last but not least, the Citizen Advocacy Board and core group consist of interested people who have a variety of skills and connections that can offer advice on specific issues you may need to deal with. We have contact with people who are knowledgeable in many areas including law, medicine, financial and welfare matters.

Get Togethers - Advocate Workshops/Discussion Evenings

As mentioned earlier, fellow advocates can be a good source of support. Throughout the year we arrange small informal meetings of Advocates which provide opportunity to share ideas, successes and concerns. These meetings help to keep you, the Advocate, in touch with other people in similar situations. They also create opportunities to develop support networks amongst other Advocates.

We hold regular information nights and can arrange discussion evenings on more specific issues, enabling Advocates to learn about a range of topics that would assist in their relationship. If you have any suggestions for such nights, we would love to hear them.

Newsletter

A regular newsletter is sent to all Advocates and Proteges. The aim of the Newsletter is to keep you up-to-date with the activities of the local Program and other developments in Citizen Advocacy. The Newsletter may include articles on current thinking about our organisation and its response to intellectual disability. If you would like to share your experiences as an Advocate, an article for the Newsletter would be much appreciated.

Resources

The Citizen Advocacy Office has a growing library of resources, videos, tapes, articles, journal and books which you are welcome to borrow.

Where Do I Go For Information?

There are many areas that you can assist your Protege. For example: recreation; education; financial management; public transport; employment; and accommodation. Or even things that seem quite simple such as using a telephone, opening a bank account or shopping.

It is often difficult knowing where to start and how to find assistance or changing your Protege's current situation. A lot of talking and thinking needs to be done to determine this.

If you're assisting your Protege and require further information, here are some options for you to consider.

Think of where you would go for help in these particular situations . For instance:

* If you were looking for a job you might contact your local CES, look in the paper, talk to friends or contact employment sources directly.

* If you were looking for recreational activities, you may contact local clubs; City Council; Neighbourhood Centres; or look in the local paper and see what is happening.

* If you were wanting to find out about furthering your education, you may contact TAFE; your local evening college; or your local school.

Thinking of the avenues you would take yourself is a useful start. Your Protege has the right of access to these places, and it is preferable for him or her to use them where possible.

If it is not possible, talk to the Citizen Advocacy staff and maybe other advocates about the options available. The office has knowledge of many of the services and options available to people with intellectual disabilities. If we can't help in providing information directly, we will find out for you or put you in contact with people who can.

Remember, you are not expected to know everything and there is plenty of support available.

Citizen Advocacy Principles

As an advocate, you have made a decision to enter another person's life, to respond to that person's unmet needs and vulnerabilities. Your contribution as an Advocate is important and as we try to support you in your relationship, it is important for you to consider the principles upon which the Citizen Advocacy Program - and your relationship - is founded:

An advocate is an independent person who represents the interests of another person as if those interests were his or her own.

To be independent it is essential that:

- a) Advocates are supported by - but independent of - the Citizen Advocacy Office;
- b) Advocates are independent of the agencies and settings which provide - or could provide - services to their Protege and;
- c) Advocates are independent from families of their Proteges in instances when the interests of the family are different from those of the Protege.

Advocates must be free to develop a primary loyalty to their Protege. The loyalty principal is at the heart of Citizen Advocacy and forms the basis of your actions as an Advocate.

Advocates are unpaid volunteers providing support for a *person with disability*. This support is not to any other agency or person, including the Citizen Advocacy Program. It is important to remember that your Protege may be dependent upon other services and it may be the case

that their family members and service staff will not - and often cannot - have your Protege's best interests at heart. This means that you must consider situations from the perspective of your Protege.

1. We seek to avoid conflicts of interest. So we would not match, for example, a person with his or her Residential Care worker.
2. The Citizen Advocacy Program must strive to operate independently - be free from any direct or indirect conflicts of interest with other service agencies.
3. Proteges and Advocates will have the support of paid staff as well as other professionals who give of their time as Advocate Associates. Staff and Advocate Associates will support - not supplant - the efforts of Citizen Advocates. Nor can staff advocate on behalf of one particular Protege.
4. As each individual's need for Advocacy is diverse, the Citizen Advocacy Program will recruit and support Citizen Advocates to take on one or more of a diverse range of roles: formal and informal; practical/problem solving; personal support; high, medium and low demand.

Many people with a disability have had numerous people walk in and out of their lives and they therefore need people who are prepared to make substantive, personal commitments. Sometimes these commitments will last throughout the person's life. Other people may need specific help over a short period of time. The program therefore aims to create a range of long-term and short-term relationships.

5. People who have differences that are not valued by society tend to be surrounded by negative images, therefore the Citizen Advocacy and Advocates should strive to present the most positive interpretation of the nature and needs of people with disability. We can all utilise constructive, value conferring images through positive, respectful language and "labels; age-appropriate activities and encouragement of value appearance.
6. The Citizen Advocacy program will have available sufficient staff to perform the key activities of the program including: recruitment of people with disability who have unmet needs; recruitment of suitable Citizen Advocates; orientation of Advocates; matching; follow-up and support to relationships; providing on-going 'training' for Advocates and the recruitment and involvement of Advocate Associates.
7. The Citizen Advocacy Program - including the Board of Management - will develop and foster solid support from all sectors of the community.

Confidentiality

We see that Citizen Advocacy relationships have great potential as being a key to community life for a person who has intellectual disability. We encourage you to introduce your Protege to your family, friends and people you know.

However, the confidentiality of your Protege should be respected. Just as you would not casually discuss any personal affairs of friends; please remember that many details of your Protege's background and life experiences, family and financial situation, health and other issues you know are private.

We do, though, encourage you to talk about the general, enjoyable aspects of your relationship. Spread the word about Citizen Advocates, many of the Advocates we recruit hear about Citizen Advocacy through word of mouth.

Illawarra Citizen Advocacy is bound by a Privacy and Confidentiality Safeguards Policy, copies of which are available to Advocates and Proteges from the office on request. As an Advocate, you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with this document.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

1 - Definitions

1.1 A grievance is a real or imagined injustice suffered by a person and caused by another person or persons.

2 - Principles

2.1 The person who suffers a grievance has a right to justice and a right to have that grievance resolved or to have demonstrated to his or her satisfaction that the grievance is unfounded.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the Board of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy to resolve the grievance or to have it resolved or to demonstrate that it is unfounded by a procedure known as the Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Grievance Procedure (hereafter referred to as the Procedure).

2.3 It is the aim of the Procedure to resolve the grievance with the least possible upset to any person.

2.4 The procedure shall not favour the status of any person.

2.5 The procedure shall be simple and confidential by involving, for the resolution of the grievance, the least number of people possible. Any person who, by necessity, is made privy to the grievance shall not divulge any matter concerning it without the prior consent of the person who has the grievance.

2.6 The person who suffers the grievance shall have easy access to an appropriate person to explain the grievance and to have it resolved.

2.7 The Procedure shall be as informal as possible and shall allow the person with the grievance to be in control of the process of resolving the grievance. In that regard, the persons charged with resolving the grievance shall, as far as this is possible, avoid discussion of the matter in the absence of the person with a grievance who shall, in any event, be kept informed by those persons of any matter concerning the grievance.

2.8 A Conciliator and a Deputy Conciliator shall be appointed from the Board. The Deputy Conciliator shall act whenever the Conciliator is absent or is, for any other reason, unable to act.

2.9 The Procedure shall encourage the person with the grievance to attempt to resolve the grievance in the first instance directly with the person who is the cause of the grievance, and without the intervention of the Conciliator or of any other person.

2.10 The resolution of the grievance shall be fair and just. The person with the grievance will be notified of the attempts made for resolution within (5) working days. If the

grievance cannot be resolved within this timeframe, the person making the grievance will continue to be informed of the steps being taken to resolve the grievance.

- 2.11 The grievance procedure shall be explained to all staff, advocates, proteges and members of the Board. In that regard, Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Policies for 'Communicating In Language That Is Easily Understood' shall apply.
- 2.12 All records and information of grievances heard shall be securely stored at the Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Office.
- 2.13 Where a grievance concerns sexual harassment, the Grievance Procedure - Sexual Harassment will be used. The Sexual Harassment contact person is the Chairperson of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy.
- 2.14 This grievance procedure gives guidance in the following circumstances:

Section 3 - A grievance between Advocate and Protege.

Section 4 - A grievance between a Protege or Advocate, and a member of staff or a member of the Board.

Section 5 - A grievance between members of the Staff, or between Staff and a member of the Board.

Section 6 - A grievance by a member of the public, or by members of services other than Illawarra Citizen Advocacy.

3 - Grievance Procedure - Advocate/Protege

Where a grievance is suffered in an Protege - Advocate relationship, the person with the grievance may use the following procedure:-

- 3.1 The person with the grievance should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the advocate or the protege so that both have a clear understanding of the grievance and of its cause.
- 3.2 The advocate and protege should attempt to resolve the grievance.
- 3.3 If the advocate and protege cannot resolve the grievance, the person with the grievance should inform the Chairperson of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy. The person with the grievance may, in the first instance if they so choose, speak with the Chairperson alone and in total confidence. The Chairperson will make a time available for such a consultation within two weeks of being informed of the grievance or, by mutual agreement, arrange a meeting for a later time
- 3.4 The Chairperson will make a time available to meet and speak in confidence with the advocate and the protege together within two weeks of being informed of the grievance or within two weeks of any consultation undertaken in 3.3 or at later time by mutual agreement of all parties. At this meeting the Chairperson will attempt to resolve the grievance.
- 3.5 If the Chairperson together with the advocate and the protege cannot resolve the grievance, the person with the grievance may ask the Chairperson to inform the Conciliator of the matter.

- 3.6 The Conciliator will note the wishes of the persons concerned, whether the person with the grievance and the advocate or protege wish to discuss the matter alone in the first instance, or jointly.
- 3.7 The Conciliator shall use their best endeavours to resolve the grievance within one month and may, if that fails, by mutual consent of advocate and protege, dissolve the relationship.
- 3.8 If the Chairperson is unavailable, in a conflict of interest or otherwise not able to act as specified in 3.3 to 3.5, the Chairperson or the Board of Management may select another Board member to act in their place.

4 - Grievance Procedure - Protege or Advocate/Staff or Member of the Board

In the event of a grievance between a member of the staff or a member of the Board of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy, and a protege, or an advocate, or a protege jointly with the advocate, the person with the grievance may use the following procedure-

- 4.1 Within two weeks of notification of the grievance, the member of staff or member of the Board who is a party to the grievance shall, if the advocate is not already involved, ask the protege whether they wish the advocate to be informed and to be present at a discussion. Within two weeks of notification of the grievance or two weeks of contacting the protege (if relevant), the member of staff or member of the Board who is a party to the grievance shall make a time available for a meeting at which, in the first instance, the parties should discuss the matter so that all have a clear understanding of the grievance and its cause. Any of the parties to the grievance may inform the Chairperson or ask them to take part in the discussion. The parties should, at this discussion attempt to resolve the grievance.
- 4.2 If they cannot resolve the grievance, the person with the grievance - or any of the parties - should inform the Chairperson of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy. The parties to the grievance may, in the first instance if they so choose, speak with the Chairperson alone and in total confidence. The Chairperson will make a time available for such a consultation within two weeks of being informed of the grievance or, by mutual agreement, arrange a meeting for a later time. The Chairperson will make a time available to meet and speak in confidence with the parties together within two weeks of being informed of the grievance or within two weeks of any consultation undertaken or at a later time by mutual agreement of all parties. At this meeting the Chairperson will attempt to resolve the grievance.
- 4.3 If the Chairperson is not able to resolve the grievance, then the person with the grievance - or any of the parties - may inform the Conciliator, or may ask the Chairperson to inform the Conciliator of the matter.
- 4.4 The Conciliator will note the wishes of the persons concerned whether they wish, in the first instance, to speak to the Conciliator alone, or jointly.
- 4.5 The Conciliator shall use their best endeavours to resolve the grievance within one month. If that fails, the person with the grievance - or any of the parties - may ask the Conciliator to have the matter raised at the next meeting of the Board. The Chairperson may, at their discretion, invite the parties to be heard at the meeting of

the Board.

4.6 In its endeavours to resolve the grievance, the Board shall act according to the Constitution of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Inc., and in the best interest of the protegee.

4.7 If the Chairperson is unavailable, in a conflict of interest or otherwise not able to act as specified in 4.1 to 4.5, the Chairperson or the Board of Management may select another Board member to act in their place.

5 - Grievance Procedure - Staff/Staff or Staff/Member of the Board

In the event of a grievance between members of the staff of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy or between a member of the staff and a member of the Board, the person with a grievance may use the following procedure:-

5.1 In the first instance the aggrieved person shall discuss the matter of dispute with the person or persons directly concerned to identify what the aggrieved person believes would be a workable and courteous way of solving the grievance.

5.2 Should this not resolve the grievance, the staff member shall discuss the grievance , and what actions may resolve it with the Co-ordinator.

5.3 If the Co-ordinator does not satisfy the staff member that the grievance has been resolved, or if the grievance involves the Citizen Advocacy Co-ordinator, then the aggrieved member of staff may send a memo to the Conciliator, with a copy of the memo sent directly to the Citizen Advocacy Co-ordinator, outlining the grievance and recommending a course of action to resolve the situation. The Board shall be the final arbiter of the dispute.

5.3a The Board will deal with the grievance no later than its second meeting following receipt of a recommendation to this effect from the Conciliator.

5.4 The staff member or its Board may approach their respective industrial representatives or union and ask them to advocate on their behalf at any stage of the above Procedure.

6 - Grievance Procedure - Member of the Public or Members of Services other than Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Inc.

Where concern or a grievance is expressed by a member of the public or by a member of a service, Illawarra Citizen Advocacy shall use the following procedure:-

6.1 The Chairperson will make a time available to discuss the grievance with the concerned person within two weeks of receiving it and, at this discussion, attempt to resolve the matter.

6.2 If the matter has been resolved, the Chairperson shall submit a written report, to the Board at its next meeting.

- 6.3 If the matter has not been resolved, the Chairperson shall request the concerned person to submit his/her concern in writing to Illawarra Citizen Advocacy (if that has not already been done).
- 6.4 The Chairperson may, if he or she chooses to do so, meet the concerned person and attempt to resolve the matter.
- 6.5 If the Chairperson and the concerned person cannot resolve the matter, the Chairperson shall have the matter heard at the next meeting of the Board or at a meeting of the Board convened specially for that purpose.
- 6.6 The Chairperson may, at their discretion, invite the concerned person to be heard at the meeting of the Board when the matter is addressed.
- 6.7 If the Chairperson is unavailable, in a conflict of interest or otherwise not able to act as specified in 6.1 to 6.6, the Chairperson or the Board of Management may select another Board member to act in their place.

Glossary of Citizen Advocacy Terms

Advocate Associate

A volunteer to the Advocacy Office who possesses skills and knowledge useful to Advocates and Proteges and who can, from time to time, offer advice and expertise on a variety of issues which may be affecting the Protege's life.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is made up of leading local citizens who are committed to seeking justice for, and the acceptance of, people with disability within our society. The role of the Board primarily is to govern and ensure that the program is properly administered and adheres to Citizen Advocacy Principles. It also exists to provide leadership where appropriate. Each member of the Board uses their commitment to the Program to build networks of support and foster trust and confidence within the local community so as to develop a stable base on which the Program can develop.

Citizen Advocate

A person who volunteers to form a one-to-one relationship with another person who has an intellectual or multiple disability and to represent the person's interests as if they were the Advocates own.

Crisis Advocate

An advocate who is able to act on behalf of a Protege who is in a situation which requires immediate action.

Protege

A person with an intellectual disability or multiple disability who has been matched with a Citizen Advocate who will represent his or her interests.

Acknowledgments and References

Much of the information contained in this handbook has been taken and/or, adapted from the Advocate Handbooks of:

Citizen Advocacy Australian Capital Territory Inc.,
Citizen Advocacy Ryde-Hunters Hill Inc.,
Citizen Advocacy Eastside Inc.

Much of the information about Social Role Valorisation was adapted from *Changing Lives Changing Communities* by Harriet Zeigler (Wesley Central Mission, 1989).

We exist only if and when our existence is recognised by others

In Christ