

---

**ADVOCATE**

**HANDBOOK**

---

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
What is Citizen Advocacy? .....	2
The initial stages of your relationship .....	3
Why is there a need for Citizen Advocacy?.....	3
What is disability? .....	5
What is an Intellectual Disability?.....	6
What is Multiple Disability? .....	6
What do Advocates do? .....	6
Social Role Valorisation – a brief introduction .....	7
Expectations .....	8
Growth .....	8
Role Models .....	8
<b>‘Bending over Backwards’</b> .....	8
Community Participation .....	8
About the Community .....	8
Rights of People with Intellectual Disability .....	10
Rights recognised in Legislation and other significant documents .....	11
The issue of the Right to choose .....	11
What does the Citizen Advocacy Program ask of the Advocates .....	12
We suggest .....	12
What does the Citizen Advocacy Office offer Advocates .....	13
Personal support and Follow-up .....	13
Get Together: Advocate Workshops/Discussion Evenings .....	13
Resources .....	13
Where do I go for Information .....	13
Citizen Advocacy Principles .....	15
Citizen Advocacy Independence .....	15
Citizen Advocacy Program Independence .....	15
Clarity of Citizen Advocacy Office (staff) Role and Function .....	15
Balanced Approach to Protégé Recruitment .....	16
Positive images of protégé .....	16
Confidentiality .....	16
Glossary of Citizen Advocacy Terms .....	17
Acknowledgements and References .....	17

---

## *Introduction*

This Handbook provides a basic introduction to Citizen Advocacy. It is intended to serve as a useful resource in your role as a citizen advocate, and raises a number of issues that may be useful for you to consider in your advocacy relationship.

In becoming a Citizen Advocate, you are making a commitment to a relationship with a person **with disability, and to meet some of this person's needs. Your actions in responding to these needs will depend on the particular individual needs and issues in that person's life, and varies for each individual relationship.**

Whatever the particular issues in each individual relationship, the common feature of all citizen advocacy relationships is that it is a response on the part of one member of the community to ensure that the needs and interests of another member of the community, a person with disability who is vulnerable and who has unmet needs, are acknowledged, understood, responded to and defended.

As you embark upon your advocacy relationship, it is worth being mindful that, as with all relationships, there are bound to be highs and lows, times of struggle and challenge and times of fulfilment, excitement and celebration.

And whatever is happening in your advocacy relationship, it is always worthwhile taking the time to consider the importance of your contribution towards another person by becoming a Citizen Advocate.

## *What is Citizen Advocacy?*

Citizen Advocacy entails the establishment and support of a one-to-one relationship between a person who has a disability, who is vulnerable and has unmet needs in one or more important areas of their life, and a citizen who is competent, resourceful and principled, who is free from conflict of interest, and who makes a personal commitment to provide the appropriate support to the person with disability. This support may take many forms, from emotional and material support through to spokespersonship.

Citizen Advocates are usually recruited by a Citizen Advocacy Program, which is also free from conflicts of interest. They participate in an orientation process and are matched with a person who has a disability. The Citizen Advocacy Program also provides advocates substantial support 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 decide the terms and conditions of their relationship together, 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.

Throughout this Handbook, the term *Protégé* is used to refer to the person with disability in a Citizen Advocacy relationship.

The dictionary defines the word *protégé* as **“one who is under the protection and guidance on another person”**.

The word *protégé* is taken from the French word “*protégér*”, meaning “to protect”.

---

## *The Initial Stages of Your Relationship*

In the initial stages of most relationships, each Protégé and Advocate 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 their Protégé leads and of their needs and aspirations. This awareness will help each Advocate to decide what opportunities they can offer their Protégé 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 **Protégé's address and telephone number and that you have given yours in return.**

**Do not underestimate your Protégé's abilities, and do not over-protect him or her.** It is appropriate to occasionally offer challenges. Normal risks are part of every-day 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 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 the 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 disability are able to minimise or even overcome these disadvantages by developing their own personal resources, or by relying on the support of family and friends.

Many more people, however, have few or no personal resources, family members or support mechanisms that 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 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 disability. Citizen Advocacy possesses the potential to:

- ❖ increase the social status of people who have disability.
- ❖ create acceptance and inclusion through freely given relationships.
- ❖ provide continuity through long-term relationships.
- ❖ create a wide range of positive experiences.
- ❖ increase control and power in the person's life. Safeguard the person from exploitation and neglect.
- ❖ change community attitudes and promote understanding of the issues facing people who have intellectual or multiple disability.

---

## *What is a disability?*

Capricorn Citizen Advocacy is funded to implement Citizen Advocacy for people with a disability, as defined under the Disability Services Act.

The Disability Services Act 2006 defines *disability* as being:

**“Attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of impairments, and that results in a substantial reduction of the person’s capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and the person needing support.”**

To summarise, types of disabilities as defined under the act include:

- **Intellectual Disability**

eg:

- impairment in areas of intelligence, perception and volition
- may be apparent at birth or acquired later in life
- precise causes not well understood

- **Psychiatric Disability**

eg;

- Schizophrenia
- Bi-polar Disorder
- Anxiety and Depression

- **Cognitive Disability**

eg:

- Dementia
- Amnesic disorder
- **Alzheimer’s disease**
- **Huntington’s disease**

- **Neurological Disability**

eg;

- Acquired brain injury
- Cerebral palsy

- **Sensory Disability**

eg;

- Vision impaired
- Hearing impaired

- **Physical Disability**

eg:

- Paraplegia
- Quadriplegia

***Emphasis on intellectual and psychiatric disabilities***

While Capricorn Citizen Advocacy has the capacity to respond to people with this range of disabilities, it is anticipated that, over time, the majority of people who are recruited as protégés will have an intellectual and/or a psychiatric disability, because experience has shown that people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities tend to be the most devalued and the most vulnerable people in our communities.

---

## ***What is Intellectual Disability?***

Intellectual disability is a term that describes a large variety of conditions that may be apparent at birth, acquired, or become apparent throughout 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 impairment in the areas of intelligence, perception 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 that 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. Generally speaking, people with intellectual disability are not visibly different from people who do not have a disability.

## ***What is Multiple Disability?***

Multiple disabilities 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, as well as intellectual and psychiatric disabilities.

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 support 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 Citizen Advocates may do for - and with - their Protégés is very broad.

They may:

- ❖ assist their Protégé to grow and develop their skills, abilities, image and status by challenging their potential and low expectations and stereotypes to which they may have been subjected.
- ❖ introduce their Protégé to new experiences, resources and networks within the community.
- ❖ act as a guide, mentor and assistant to their Protégé as they encounter challenges and difficulties in their life.
- ❖ **speak out for their Protégé's welfare and interest.**
- ❖ **make sure that their Protégé'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 affect their life is recognised, encouraged, developed and respected.

---

## *Social Role Valorisation - a brief introduction*

Special problems emerge for people with disability when members of the community see them as being different from other people in an undesirable way.

Some people differ in ways that are seen positively. For example, medal-winning athletes are held in high regard for their fitness and agility. Other peoples 'differences', though, may be viewed negatively: for example, a person with cerebral palsy who has difficulty eating and uses a wheelchair.

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 disabilities. This in turn will affect the way these people are responded to.

**Many individuals and groups experience this process, known as 'devaluing'. For example,** people who have intellectual disability are often thought of as objects of pity and charity, or as being sick. Adults are often treated like children and as objects of ridicule.

Devaluing is largely an unconscious reaction to people whom 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. Therefore, devaluing can be overcome.

When a person is devalued, they are likely to be treated in ways that diminish their dignity, development, competence, health and financial security. They are also likely to be rejected and persecuted. In addition, this will usually 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 (eg. 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 is to change lives by attributing socially valued roles to the person who has been devalued. People who take on valued roles (eg. Teacher, taxpayer, neighbour, employee) are unlikely to be rejected, especially if they fill several 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 Protégé 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 sportsperson and team-mate.

Consider what will enable your Protégé to be accepted by others as well as what it is that may mean they will not be accepted. For example, it is unlikely your Protégé 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 businessperson's social club.

Also, consider encouraging your Protégé 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, encourage them to improve his or her conversational skills may be valuable in finding a job. Alternatively, helping them to learn how to cook may be instrumental in being regarded as a potential flat-mate.



---

Applying several guidelines can change the community's view of a person:

### 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 disability have always been expected to fail. The high expectations you have for your Protégé 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 disability need positive role models in their lives and they need to be able to identify closely with them.

### 'Bending Over Backwards'

Extra effort must be made to help make up for the many ways devalued people have been hurt. Your Protégé 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.

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 and do everything possible to increase the likelihood that a person who has been devalued will be positively valued by the community. We should also avoid doing anything that will perhaps further devalue or hurt that 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 the 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. However, this should occur at a local primary school: being part of the valued school community 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 Protégé and others as constructive as possible. As well, the image that your Protégé 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.

Many images reflect upon people who have been devalued:

- 
- ❖ staff who refer to 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 as well as the view the community has of these people.

Remember that images are conveyed in many ways:

- ❖ the company people keep
- ❖ what people do
- ❖ habits and mannerisms
- ❖ where people live
- ❖ appearance (clothing, grooming, hygiene)
- ❖ labels

## Conclusion

Together, these ideas form the basis of the theory of Social Role Valorisation. Because Citizen Advocacy emerged from SRV, Capricorn Citizen Advocacy strongly endorses its beliefs.

---

## *Rights of People with Intellectual Disability*

All Australians are entitled to the same fundamental rights, including people with disability. Sometimes, people are not aware that this applies to people with disabilities.

The issue of fundamental human rights is often most apparent when injustice emerges. However, the issue of rights arises not only in crisis but also in our day-to-day lives. Many privileges that we take for granted are our 'right-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 disability have their fundamental human rights systematically denied or otherwise forgotten by the many people who wrongly believe that no - or different - rights apply. Occasionally, a person's capacity to independently exercise their rights may be lawfully restricted through a Guardianship Order. The Guardian, however, should act on the person's behalf to ensure that their rights are enforced and respected.

- ❖ People with 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 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 of a legally recognised person.
- ❖ People with 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 heritage respected and to speak in their own language.
- ❖ People with disability have the right to participate in *all* aspects of community life: to work, to vote, to be a member of a club, to choose relationships.
- ❖ People with 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 all here. The few mentioned above arise because of the particular vulnerability experienced by people with a disability.

As a Citizen Advocate, one of your roles will be to protect the rights of your protégé by ensuring that he or she has the opportunity to exercise their fundamental rights in the way that most people do.

For many Advocates, your day-to-day experiences with your Protégé will enhance the **community's respect for the rights of people with disability**. A day spent with your Protégé visiting the Art Gallery or Museum, for example, or by utilising public transport makes a statement to the community that people with disability have the right to use and have access to public facilities.

There may be instances where your protégé tells you something, or asks for something, and your role as advocate will be to listen and act upon what you have heard. For example, if you became aware that your Protégé is subject to physical abuse, you have an obligation to speak and/or act on their behalf to prevent the continuation of the abuse. In so doing, you will be acting to protect their rights.

---

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

### *Rights recognised in Legislation and other significant documents*

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

- Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld)
- Anti Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 (Qld)
- Powers of Attorney Act 1998 (Qld)
- Public Trustee Act 1978 (Qld)
- Mental Health Act 2000 (Qld)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Health Services Act 1991 (Qld)
  
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Commonwealth)
  
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (United Nations)
- Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled Persons 1975 (United Nations)
- Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons 1971 (United Nations)
- World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons 1982 (United Nations)
- Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 1993 (United Nations)

A clear statement of the rights of people with disability is found in the Principles and Objectives of the Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld) which states:

**“People with a disability have the same human rights as other members of society and should be empowered to exercise their rights.”**

#### *The issue of the right to choose*

One right that people with disability are often denied is their right to choose. For example, people with disability who live in institutions are often woken at 6.00am, even on weekends, even if they **do not want to wake up at that time, or have no reason to, because it suits the institution’s schedule.**

As an advocate, you could assist a person to express their wish, exercise their right, not to being woken at that time. Having someone take action to stop such intrusions enables a person to exercise their right to privacy and personal freedom, and will make an enormous difference in a **Protégé’s life.**

However, **one should be mindful that the issue of ‘the right to choose’** can be taken to unreasonable extremes in some instances. For example, to assist or support a person to jump off **a cliff or throw themselves under a train because they tell you that it’s their choice,** is a superficial interpretation of the issue of rights. Such as action is not in the best interests of the person, which is why we generally talk about advocacy being focused on the welfare and best interests of a **person, rather than on people’s rights.**

---

## *What Does the Citizen Advocacy Program Ask of Advocates?*

As a Citizen Advocate, you are responsible to your Protégé. The office is here to support your relationship and you are encouraged to keep in contact.

**You are not responsible to the office; you are responsible to your Protégé.**

There are the few areas in which we ask you to take responsibility:

1. To keep the commitment you make to your Protégé.
2. To keep in touch with the office every two or three weeks (at first) or once a month to keep us posted on what is happening. You can call the office at any time or tell us a time that is convenient for us to contact you.
3. To contact the office ASAP if you are moving or your circumstance or situation changes
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 participate, with your Protégé, in evaluations of our Program, which will enable us to know whether the **Programme is meeting you, and your Protégé's needs. This will also** enable us to determine ways in which we can improve the services and infrastructure of Citizen Advocacy.

### ***We suggest...***

Further, we suggest that you keep a diary of your activities and experiences as a Citizen Advocate, including things you do together with your protégé, meetings you attend in a **spokesperson role, and changes in your Protégé's life. There are several reasons we suggest** this, including 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.

---

## *What Does the Citizen Advocacy Office Offer Advocates?*

### **Personal Support and Follow-Up**

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 Protégé and may at times make suggestions to help you.

The office can provide significant support if you are having difficulties in your relationship. It is always useful to talk over issues and problems with other people and usually 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 experiences with you. Alternatively, we can place you in contact with an Advocate Associate who has the specialised knowledge or skills you seek in dealing with your concern.

Finally, yet importantly, the Management Committee members of Capricorn Citizen Advocacy are 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, finance and welfare.

### **Get-Together: 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 an 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 periodic information sessions about Citizen Advocacy, and can arrange discussion sessions on more specific issues, enabling advocates to learn about a range of topics that may assist their relationship. If you have any suggestions for such events, we would be interested to hear what you have to say.

### **Resources**

The Citizen Advocacy Office has a growing library of resources, videos, tapes, articles, journals and books that you are welcome to borrow, or copies can be made for you on request.

### **Where do I go for information?**

You can assist your Protégé in many areas. For example: recreation; education; financial management; public transport; employment; and accommodation. Alternatively, 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 finding assistance **in changing your Protégé's** current situation. A lot of talking and thinking needs to be done to determine this.

If you're assisting your Protégé 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 Centrelink office; look in the paper; talk to friends; or contact employment sources directly.

- 
- ❖ If you were looking for recreational activities, you may contact local clubs; local council; Neighbourhood Centres; or look in the local newspaper 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 Protégé has the right of access to these places, and it is preferable for him or her to use them where possible.

If this is not possible, talk to the Citizen Advocacy staff and other Advocates about the options available. The office has knowledge of many of the services and options available to people with 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 Programme - and your relationship - is founded:

### **Citizen Advocate Independence**

**- including the primary loyalty of citizen advocates to protégés**

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 Protégé's**:
- c) Advocates are independent from the families of Protégés in instances when the interests of the family are different from - or in conflict with - those of the Protégé.

It is important to remember that your Protégé may be dependent upon support services, and it may be the case that their family members and service staff will not - and often cannot - have **your Protégé's best interests at heart**. **This means that you must consider situations from the perspective of your Protégé.**

That is, advocates must be free to develop a primary loyalty to their Protégé. The loyalty principal lies at the heart of Citizen Advocacy and forms the basis for your actions as an Advocate.

Further, *Advocate Independence* means that Citizen Advocates are not paid, reimbursed or compensated in any way, and that their involvement is a matter of personal choice to make a commitment to a freely-given relationship. The unpaid role of an advocate is important in ensuring that advocates are as free as possible from conflicts of interest, and not compromised in their capacity to undertake independent advocacy. The unpaid nature of the role also gives a protégé the opportunity to form a relationship with someone who freely chooses to be there, rather than being involved because they are paid to.

Advocates will have the support of paid staff as well as other professionals who donate 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 Protégé.

### **Citizen Advocacy Program Independence**

The Citizen Advocacy Programme strives to operate independently - to be free from any direct or indirect conflicts of interest - with service agencies or any other organisation or individual.

### **Clarity of Citizen Advocacy Office (staff) role and function**

The Citizen Advocacy Program will have sufficient staff available to perform the key activities of the Programme including; the recruitment of people with disability who have unmet needs; the recruitment of suitable Citizen Advocates; the orientation of Advocates; matching; follow-



---

up and support for relationships; the provision of on-going 'training' for Advocates; and the recruitment and involvement of Advocate Associates.

Citizen Advocacy staff must not do citizen advocacy on behalf of or instead of an advocate. Staffs establish and support advocate – protégé relationships, and direct their energies towards building and maintaining the Citizen Advocacy Program as a whole.

### **Balanced approach to protégé recruitment**

*- i.e.; meet a wide range of protégé needs and advocacy roles*

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 level demand.

Many people with 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. The Program therefore aims to create a range of long-term and short-term relationships.

### **Positive images of protégé**

*- i.e.; project a positive image and interpretation of protégé characteristics*

People who have differences that are not generally valued by society, such as people with disabilities, tend to be surrounded by negative images. Therefore, Citizen Advocacy and Citizen Advocates should strive to present to the public the most positive interpretation of the nature and needs of people with disability.

Positives, value-conferring images and interpretations of the characteristics of people with disability can be projected through positive, respectful language and 'labels'; age-appropriate activities; and the encouragement of valued appearance.

## ***Confidentiality***

We recognise that Citizen Advocacy relationships possess great potential as the key to community life for a person who has disability. We encourage you to introduce your Protégé to your family, friends and people you know.

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

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

---

## *Glossary of Citizen Advocacy Terms*

### **Advocate Associate**

A person who possesses skills and knowledge useful to Advocates and Protégés who can, from time to time, offer advice and expertise, in an unpaid capacity, on a variety of issues which may **be effecting the Protégé's life.**

### **Citizen Advocate**

A person who makes a commitment to form a freely-given, one-to-one relationship with another person who has a disability, to meet **some of that person's needs and to represent that person's** interests as if they were the their own.

### **Crisis Advocate**

An Advocate who is able to act on behalf of a Protégé who is in a situation, which requires immediate action.

### **Management Committee**

The Management Committee 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 Management Committee is primarily 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 Management Committee uses their commitment to the Program to build networks of support and to foster trust and confidence within the local community so as to develop a stable base upon which the Programme can develop.

### **Protégé'**

A person with a disability who has been matched with a Citizen Advocate who will respect his or her interests.

### **Acknowledgements and References**

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

- Citizen Advocacy Australian Capital Territory Inc.,
- Side by Side Advocacy
- Illawarra Citizen Advocacy Inc.
- Citizen Advocacy Eastside Inc.
- Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy Inc

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