

<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	<b>020 – ADVOCACY POLICY</b>		
<b>VERSION:</b>	003	<b>DATE EFFECTIVE:</b>	01/03/2013
<b>AUTHORISED BY:</b>	Chief Executive Officer	<b>DATE REVIEWED:</b>	08/04/2022

## PURPOSE

This policy supports the role of advocates and acknowledges the importance of advocates, Participants’ rights, the commitment of ARC Disability Services Inc. (ARC) to maintain links with formal advocacy services and staff training with regard to advocacy services. It also recognises that specific groups, for example, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities may need assistance to understand and to participate in the advocacy process by using an advocate of their choice.

## SCOPE

All Employees, Participants and the ARC community are responsible for ensuring that individuals are heard when they speak out about their rights.

## DEFINITION

Participant advocacy can be described as the process of standing beside an individual or group and speaking out on their behalf to protect and promote their rights and interests. An advocate may be a friend, a family member, a neighbour or someone from an independent advocacy organisation.

## IMPLEMENTATION

ARC embraces the principle that Participants have the right to raise concerns regarding services without fear of retribution. ARC is committed to ensuring that all Participants are encouraged to use an advocate and have access to an advocate of their choice, who can play a critical role in ensuring the rights and interests of the Participant is respected and realised. The Participant’s right to decide to self-advocate or change their advocate is consistent with this policy.

All citizens of Australia have fundamental rights, which are underpinned by the principles of social justice. These fundamental rights are embedded in the values of ARC. Accordingly, Participants are entitled to express their views and uphold their rights. It may be difficult for Participants to do this alone, as they may not always have the confidence or skills required. In some instances, it may be more effective to seek the assistance of a friend or relative or an advocacy agency. As Participants of ARC, individuals have the right to involve an advocate of their choice to represent their interests at any time. Participants are entitled, as a minimum, to the following:

- The right to privacy and confidentiality;
- The right to access personal information held by ARC;
- The right to be treated with respect and dignity;
- The right to recognition and respect of cultural, religious and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- The right to receive a good quality service that meets the Participant’s specific needs and to be advised of the limits of the provided service;
- The right to accurate information about available services to assist the Participant in making an informed decision about the most appropriate service for their needs;
- The right to provide direct and honest feedback about the service provided without fear of retribution;
- The right to the assistance of an interpreter if English is not the Participant’s first language; and
- The right to express opinions and to be supported by an advocate who may be a friend or relative or an advocacy agency to speak out on the Participant’s behalf to protect and promote their rights and interests.

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## DISABILITY ADVOCACY AGENCIES

Disability advocacy agencies provide a critical role in ensuring the rights and interests of people with a disability are respected and realised.

ARC believes that:

- Any Participant of its services has a right to seek the support of an advocate; or an advocacy agency to help deal with a disagreement with the organisation;
- It has a responsibility to work together in a co-operative manner with workers from such agencies; and
- It has the responsibility to make sure that Participants of its services are aware of advocacy agencies and how to contact them.

Details of relevant advocacy agencies are as follows.

Rights in Action: (07) 4031 7377  
Aged & Disability Advocacy QLD Branch: 1800 818 338  
Disability Discrimination Legal Service: 1800 650 197  
NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission: 1800 035 544

## STAFF TRAINING

ARC Staff are required to integrate into their regular activities, practices that are consistent with the Advocacy Policy. To this end, links with formal advocacy services will be maintained. Where possible, staff training will recognise the cultural needs of Participants and include information about:

- The role of an advocate;
- Assisting a Participants to use and engage an advocate;
- How to work with Participants who choose to use an advocate;
- How and where to document the Participant's choice of advocate;
- The process for the use of interpreters when required; and
- Information regarding formal advocacy service agencies.

## REFERENCES

*NDIS Code of Conduct*

## AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:



**BENJAMIN KEAST**

Chief Executive Officer

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