

POLICY TITLE:	ADVOCACY POLICY		
VERSION:	004	DATE EFFECTIVE:	01/03/2013
AUTHORISED BY:	Chief Executive Officer	DATE REVIEWED:	18/04/2024

SUMMARY

This policy ensures that everyone, especially those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island, culturally diverse backgrounds or people with disability, can choose someone to support and speak for them to protect their rights and interests.

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 regarding advocacy services. It also recognises that specific groups, for example, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disability may need assistance to understand and to participate in engagement with ARC 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.

To better understand how advocacy can effectively support and empower participants, consider the following scenarios

1. Accessing NDIS Supports:

- A participant, overwhelmed by the NDIS plan management process, is assisted by an advocate from a NDIS-partnered agency who helps understand plan options, navigate funding categories, and support during plan review meetings to ensure the necessary supports are received.

2. Challenging Service Quality:

- A participant feels that the support services provided under their NDIS plan are not meeting the agreed standards due to frequent last-minute session cancellations. An advocate helps document these issues and communicates the concerns to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, working towards finding a more reliable service provider.

3. Enhancing Personal Autonomy:

- A participant feels that their ability to make independent decisions is not being fully respected in their current living arrangement. An advocate assists the participant in communicating their desire for more autonomy and works to ensure that their rights to make personal decisions are acknowledged and upheld, leading to a revised care approach that better respects their independence.

4. Securing Additional Supports:

- A participant who uses a wheelchair and discovers that local public transport is not fully accessible, limiting their ability to attend community activities, is helped by an advocate to apply for additional NDIS funding for specialised transport services and advocates for local infrastructure improvements.

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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.

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.

Participants are entitled to select an advocate of their choice, including from advocacy agencies. With the participant’s consent, ARC will assist in connecting them with agencies that align with their specific needs and backgrounds. Below is a list of relevant agencies at regional, state, and national levels, along with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, providing contact details for convenience

AGENCY	PHONE CONTACT	EMAIL
Rights in Action:	(07) 4031 7377	rightsinaction.org
Aged & Disability Advocacy QLD Branch:	1800 818 338	info@adaaustralia.com.au
Disability Discrimination Legal Service:	1800 650 197	info@ddls.org.au
NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission:	1800 035 544	contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

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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.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Independence, Informed Choice, and Supported Decision-Making Policy
- Individual Values and Beliefs Policy
- Participant Privacy and Dignity Policy
- Participant Rights and Person-Centred Supports Policy

REFERENCES

- Disability Services Act 2006 (Queensland)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Queensland)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Information Privacy Act 2009 (Queensland)
- NDIS Code of Conduct
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)

AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:



BENJAMIN KEAST

Chief Executive Officer

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