Identifying gaps in individual advocacy across Queensland in the Disability Advocacy Program

Sally Robinson
Disability Studies and Research Institute

Publication details
Identifying gaps in individual advocacy across Queensland in the Disability Advocacy Program

Final Report

9th May, 2005

Author: Sally Robinson, Disability Studies and Research Institute

For Disability Services Queensland
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology and project plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review and project context</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging themes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options for effective use of new funding</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of non-recurrent accumulated funds</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term considerations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Disability Services Queensland contracted the Disability Studies and Research Institute to undertake research on gaps in individual advocacy for people with disability in Queensland. The project aimed to identify the areas of greatest need for individual advocacy to maximise the use of a budget allocation of $500,000 (recurrent).

The project used a participatory methodology and involved extensive interviewing of over fifty individuals representative of all funded advocacy organisations, several unfunded advocacy coalitions, Disability Services Queensland, Family and Community Services and other government bodies such as the Disability Council of Queensland. Organisations and individuals in metropolitan, regional and rural areas were consulted during the project.

Key themes
Key themes to emerge from the collection of data were:
- Concerns regarding the sustainability of existing advocacy organisations
- Geographical spread of existing advocacy services and unmet need in rural and remote areas of the state
- Particularly under-resourced target groups of people with disability

Options for effective use of funding
A range of options have been developed to make effective use of the available budget to ensure significantly more individuals with disability gain access to individual advocacy support across the state, while minimising the amount of the budget which is placed in infrastructure or non-direct costs. The options together provide a path to increasing the strength of the advocacy sector through adequate operational funding and increasing the breadth and diversity of people with disability who receive advocacy support across the state. In order that these initiatives are underpinned by sound philosophical frameworks and strong operational and governance practices, there is a need for consistent and specialised support.

In summary, the options for effective use of the $500,000 recurrent budget are:
- Augmentation of core funding of 4 individual advocacy organisations:
  - Regional Disability Advocacy Toowoomba
  - Gold Coast Advocacy
  - Mackay Advocacy
  - Amparo/Multicultural Disability Network

In order to see sustainable growth in individual advocacy in Queensland, there is a demonstrated need to provide more funding to several of the existing advocacy organisations in order to ensure the sector is built on strong foundations. While the core of individual advocacy in Queensland is strong, several organisations are struggling with funding which is inadequate for them to effectively reach significant proportions of their communities.
Identifying gaps in individual disability advocacy across Queensland

- **Funding of 5 outreach disability advocacy workers in regional and rural areas:**
  - Toowoomba
  - Cairns
  - Mackay
  - Mount Isa
  - Ipswich

The funding of a small number of outreach advocacy workers will enable a much broader reach into a greater proportion of the State. The development of several positions will also encourage the development of a network of outreach workers who are able to provide support and resourcing to one another, reducing the impact of isolation which is a risk with all positions not based solely in a base office.

- **Funding of an advocacy support and resourcing agency**

The funding of one agency to resource and support the advocacy sector in Queensland is a cost effective way for government to ensure that a baseline is being met for all agencies regarding their governance and training requirements.

**Use of non-recurrent accumulated funds**

A range of options to make effective use of non-recurrent funds which may have accumulated during the allocation period have been developed. Each of the options provide opportunities for in-depth investigation of issues of relevance to the whole Queensland advocacy sector, including:

- Investigation of innovative use of technology by advocacy organisations
- Research on increasing the reach of advocacy organisations to particular target groups of people with disability
- State wide research on issues of relevance to whole advocacy sector, such as developing culturally appropriate and effective advocacy responses for indigenous people with disability
- Evaluation of new outreach model of advocacy provision
- Sponsorship of an advocacy conference or sponsorship of attendance at national conference for advocacy workers
- Advocacy development in underserved areas of Queensland

**Long term considerations**

Several important issues and considerations were raised during the data collection process of this project. These points are systemic in nature and have relevant beyond the current budget allocation for individual advocacy, and include:

- The need for a whole of government approach to funding individual advocacy
- Sharing of government resources and infrastructure
- Mapping and tracking of need for advocacy
- Development of a shared understanding of advocacy between the sector and government
- Balance of advocacy models to ensure responsiveness and proactiveness
- Creation of a receptive community
Introduction

This report details the outcomes of a focused research project which aimed to identify gaps in individual advocacy for people with disability across Queensland. Disability Services Queensland contracted the Disability Studies and Research Institute to undertake the research between February and April 2005. The project used a participatory methodology to identify the areas of greatest need for individual advocacy and provide DSQ with a range of funding options to maximise the use of a budget allocation of $500,000 (recurrent).

Methodology and project plan
A participatory methodology underpinned the project.

Project Group
DSQ formulated an internal project group to oversee the project. This group met at the commencement of the project, at the conclusion of the consultation phase, and at the presentation of the findings.

Literature and Document Review
A comprehensive literature and document review was undertaken to build a critical picture of the historical and current issues surrounding the provision of advocacy services in Queensland. Initiatives in other States of Australia were also canvassed for their appropriateness in the Queensland context.

Engagement with key stakeholders
While it was not appropriate to include advocacy groups on the project group guiding the project, it was critical to the credibility of the review that key stakeholders were provided with the opportunity to give high level advice and information on the issues. This strategy also follows the recent advice provided to DSQ through the report 'Walking the Talk: A framework for effective engagement with people with disability, families and people who support them'.

Initial consultation was undertaken with the Disability Council of Queensland, Office of the Public Advocate, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, Queensland Parents of People with Disability, the Queensland Alliance, and a representative of the Combined Advocacy Groups Queensland.

In addition to gathering information and advice from these groups on the fundamental questions of the review, a detailed picture of those with whom we should engage in the later phase of the project was be developed.

Development of discussion paper
A short (2 page) discussion paper was developed following consultation with key stakeholders. This paper served as a discussion prompt and preparation document for those people consulted in the broader phase of the project engagement.
Identifying gaps in individual disability advocacy across Queensland

Broader Consultation
DSQ sent a letter to all funded and unfunded advocacy services in Queensland, advising that DSaRI have been contracted to undertake the project, and advising that we would be in contact with them. These services and groups were interviewed either face to face or by phone.

Consent to participate in interviews was ascertained, and privacy of participants protected. All interviews were recorded, either on audio tape or through written notes and the resulting data was thematically analysed.

Participants
In addition to meeting with state wide organisations, the review included metropolitan, regional and rural organisations. Where possible, people in regions were interviewed face to face. Beyond the limits of the project budget and timeline, people outside of Brisbane were interviewed by phone or email, as they prefer.

Face to face consultation with key individuals and organisations was conducted in the following areas.
- Brisbane
- Cairns
- Ipswich
- Toowoomba
- Mount Isa
- Rockhampton

Individuals who participated in the project in an unfunded capacity were offered a payment of $30 in recognition of their expertise and time.

Face to face and phone interviews were conducted with 54 individuals, representative of all funded advocacy organisations, several unfunded advocacy coalitions, Disability Services Queensland, Family and Community Services and other government bodies such as the Disability Council of Queensland. An additional 2 individuals participated through email questionnaire.
Literature review and context of project

Government strategic engagement with advocacy
Disability Services Queensland have placed a strong emphasis on strengthening advocacy to people with disability through the Strategic Framework. Priority 2, Safer and More Supportive Communities makes direct reference to advocacy, saying “Enhancements to safeguards and advocacy will improve the safety and reduce the vulnerability of people with a disability.” (2000:3) The Strategic Directions set by the Department also explicitly recognise the importance of access to advocacy. Strategic Direction 7, Increasing Safeguards and Advocacy states that “Both formal and informal advocacy services need to be available to ensure equitable recognition and the honouring of the rights of people with a disability.” (2000:15) Other Strategic Directions, including number 1, Strengthening Individuals, Families and Communities, focus on supporting people, their families and the community around them to develop individualised solutions which include and embed people with disability in the fabric of their community. Advocacy has an important role to play in both providing direct support to people with disability to achieve these aims, and in supporting the informal advocacy which is most frequent in people’s lives.

The Strategic Framework also recognises issues of geography in a decentralised State. “Providing services for people with a disability in rural and remote areas where the population and service infrastructure is sparse presents particular challenges for both government and community sectors. These include additional costs, lack of service infrastructure and service options, transport difficulties and difficulties in recruitment and support for staff in government and community organisations.” (2000:6)

This project directly addresses strategies within Strategic Direction seven, Increasing Safeguards and Advocacy, of “Working toward the increased provision of a range of advocacy services [in order to ensure]... Increased access to effective independent advocacy.” (2000:15)

The Queensland Bilateral Agreement made between DSQ and FACS as part of the Commonwealth States and Territories Disability Agreement also includes specific reference to advocacy in the area of strengthening supports and services based on individual needs to enhance the well-being, contribution and capacity of individuals, families and carers through “a more coordinated and effective approach to advocacy for people with disabilities”. This is identified as an area of mutual concern which will be approached collaboratively.

To this end, DSQ is currently engaged with advocacy groups to collaboratively develop a plan for the development of advocacy in Queensland. The consequent discussion paper “Strategic Framework: Advocacy for People with a Disability in Queensland: Definitions, types, principles, goal and objectives of advocacy for people with a disability” (2005) has been released for consultation, and will add substantial clarity to the structure of the advocacy sector in Queensland.
Other Jurisdictions
The Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and the Department of Human Services in Victoria also includes the goal of strengthening advocacy. The DHS State Disability Plan priority area of Strengthening Advocacy states:

As part of its commitment to promoting and protecting people’s rights, the Government will build a stronger, more accessible and more proactive advocacy sector. The Government will encourage self-advocacy programs, to assist people with a disability to be more independent and have maximum control over their own lives.”

The Government will also continue to support and strengthen advocacy services in local communities across Victoria, for those people with a disability who need the support of advocacy organisations to help protect their rights.

The Government recognises that local advocacy organisations may also need support to provide effective advocacy services to people with a disability. This may involve specialist advice or support on particular issues, or support from other advocacy organisations in local communities. The Government will establish a statewide advocacy resource unit and will provide networking opportunities for local advocacy organisations. (2003)

DHS have established a Disability Advocacy Resource Unit and Self-Advocacy Resource Unit to research current practice, investigate alternative options and develop a plan for how to resource the advocacy and self advocacy sector in Victoria. Through this process, there is a recognition of the need of the disability advocacy sector for resourcing and supporting which occurs external to the advocacy agency. A report on this project will be forthcoming in the coming months.

International advocacy models and developments
Several states of the USA have developed advocacy centres which include paid individual advocacy and citizen advocacy as separate programs under the same roof. Central to this model is the perception that the two models of advocacy co-exist and meet different needs, one for immediate assistance to resolve particular problems, and the other to provide long term, in depth support to foster the inclusion of people with disability in their communities.

Advocacy support and resourcing agencies have been developed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, with the mandate to provide support and information to advocacy agencies. The Action for Advocacy group in London (http://www.advocacy.no-ip.org/index.jsp) typifies the support and resourcing common to these groups. Their aims are “to ‘advocate for advocacy’ at a strategic level; to support the development of independent advocacy schemes; to facilitate effective networking between advocates and advocacy schemes and to promote good practice and information sharing across the advocacy sector.”
Emerging themes

Sustainability of existing individual advocacy organisations
A small number of individual advocacy organisations appear to have sufficient funding to carry out their functions, and another group have some constraints due to low funding which do not prevent them from effectively reaching their target group and running the organisation. However, it is clearly evident through the data that there are several individual advocacy organisations which are limited in their capacity to provide advocacy to people with disability due to the level of funding they receive from either DSQ or FACS.

The impact of low levels of funding is being felt in all individual disability advocacy organisations, across many areas of operation of these organisations. Limitations are found in the number of direct advocacy workers the organisations are able to employ; capacity of organisations to meet demand of people with disability in their communities; governance of organisations, in terms of supporting and resourcing management committees and ensuring sound decision making processes are developed and implemented; compliance with increasing tax, insurance and quality assurance requirements; training for staff and management and evaluation of organisations.

There are several advocacy organisations which receive less than $150,000 funding per year. It is the belief of the consultants that this amount of funding is inadequate for these organisations to effectively operate in the current environment.

The organisations receiving least funding are:
- Amparo/Multicultural Disability Network ($73,819 core funding)
- Regional Disability Advocacy ($67,246 core funding and $52,000 Project 300 funding)
- Gold Coast Advocacy ($138,228 core funding and $8,000 Project 300 funding)
- Mackay Advocacy ($146,511 core funding and $6,000 Project 300 funding)

Geographical spread of existing advocacy services and unmet need in rural and remote areas of the state
The fieldwork clearly demonstrated there are large areas in Queensland where there is significant unmet need for services, including advocacy. This is coupled with the remoteness of communities which have significant disability related need (e.g., indigenous communities) to create a climate in which significant numbers of people with disability are without access to individual advocacy.

The map below shows the coverage of existing individual disability advocacy organisations.
It is important to note that, even where there are individual advocacy organisations, there is no guarantee of a person receiving support from those agencies, particularly in Rockhampton and Sunshine Coast, where Citizen Advocacy is the only advocacy agency in the area.

Only one agency is funded to travel significant distances from their base. In this organisation, workers travel up to 8 hours on dirt roads through remote parts of the state alone into communities where their safety may at times be at risk. For several months of the year they are unable to make the drive due to the wet season making roads impassable.

**Particularly under-resourced target groups of people with disability**

Many groups of people with disability were reported as being particularly under-resourced by individual advocacy. Caution is advised in picking one particular group of people as being in greater need than another, as the social, structural and environmental context of people's lives makes a great difference to their need for advocacy.

Common to all the groups mentioned by participants in the research as particularly under-resourced by advocacy is vulnerability. Whether a person is engaged in the justice system, living in a remote area and struggling with a service provider, or indigenous, the sets of relationships and networks around that person are likely to impact on the support they receive to resolve problems. The fewer unpaid people in a person's life, the more vulnerable they may be to problems which they cannot resolve alone.
The groups of people most frequently reported as being in particular need of individual advocacy are:

- People who don't have anyone in their life to support them
- People engaging with the justice system
- People with ageing parents/carers
- Indigenous people with disability
- People with acquired brain injury
- Homeless or at risk of homelessness (incl hostels and boarding houses)
- CALD
- Dual/multiple diagnosis
- People with mental illness (outside of Project 300)
- People with ADHD, aspergers, etc – not recognised as eligible for funded services under current DSA, although until 18, recognised by education
- Children (several advocacy services not funded for under 18)
- People with challenging behaviour
- People with disability living in nursing homes
- People living in residential institutions
Options for effective use of new funding

The limited amount of funding available dictates that, where possible, infrastructure costs should be avoided to maximise the use of the monies available. The options detailed below will ensure significantly more individuals with disability gain access to individual advocacy support across the state, while minimising the amount of the budget which is placed in infrastructure or non-direct costs.

It should be noted, however, that while these options provide effective use of the available funds to provide advocacy to a greater number and range of people with disability, they do not form a long term, strategic growth plan for individual advocacy in Queensland.

In summary, the options for effective use of the $500,000 recurrent budget are:

- Augmentation of core funding of 4 individual advocacy organisations
- Funding of 5 outreach disability advocacy workers in regional and rural areas
- Funding of an advocacy support and resourcing agency

As the brief for this project specifies, the recommendations below are not costed, beyond a rough estimate of the likely cost of each option. Specific costing and consideration of the precise way funding increases will be managed is the remit of the Department.

Growth through existing organisations

Option: Core funding augmentation

In order to see sustainable growth in individual advocacy in Queensland, there is a demonstrated need to provide more funding to several of the existing advocacy organisations in order to ensure the sector is built on strong foundations. While the core of individual advocacy in Queensland is strong, several organisations are struggling with funding which is inadequate for them to effectively reach significant proportions of their communities.

While this funding could be viewed as viability or sustainability funding, the primary outcome of increasing the funding to the organisations detailed below will be an increase in the numbers of people with disability who receive individual advocacy support.

Each of the individual advocacy organisations in Queensland should be operating with core funding of not less than $150,000. A sound option for DSQ to take up is to provide extra funding for each of these organisations to ensure a benchmark of $150,000 minimum funding. Specific criteria should be developed by DSQ to ensure agencies are able to meet appropriate requirements before confirming eligibility for the new funding.
Identifying gaps in individual disability advocacy across Queensland

The organisations which would require funding augmentation are

- Amparo/Multicultural Disability Network ($73,819 core funding)
- Regional Disability Advocacy ($67,246 core funding and $52,000 Project 300 funding)
- Gold Coast Advocacy ($138,228 core funding and $8,000 Project 300 funding)
- Mackay Advocacy ($146,511 core funding and $6,000 Project 300 funding)

If each of the options put forward in this paper are taken up by DSQ, a proportion of the budget allocated for an outreach advocacy worker should be included in the final budget estimate. However, this funding is directed specifically at a new worker, rather than in recognition of the increasing amounts on infrastructure costs which are reported as causing strain to several organisations, to the point where one organisation has been unable to replace a worker.

**Outreach into regional and remote areas**

The following options address the identified need for advocacy agencies to reach further into regional and remote areas of the state. The funding of a small number of outreach advocacy workers will enable a much broader reach into a greater proportion of the State. The development of several positions will also encourage the development of a network of outreach workers who are able to provide support and resourcing to one another, reducing the impact of isolation which is a risk with all positions not based solely in a base office.

It is important to recognise that there are issues of support and resourcing of outreach workers. There are limits to the amount of time each worker can spend away from the base agency in order for them to be a contributing staff member and to receive support and supervision from the Coordinators of the service.

The model put forward by Regional Disability Advocacy (outlined below) should be applied to other regions where possible. For example, in Cairns there is a Disability Legal Advocacy Service within the Cairns Community Legal Centre which may be able to work with Rights in Action to complete a regular rural circuit travelling together. There are many instances where these links will not work, due to a potential conflict of interest arising between the advocacy organisation and the other agency. However, indications are that in Toowoomba and Cairns, linking with community outreach legal services may have minimal risk of conflict of interest.

Occupational Health and Safety requirements need to be met, particularly around the safety of workers travelling extended distances. Where possible, workers should be travelling with at least one other person.

There is a risk that outreach advocacy work could become case management. It is essential to the model that effective support, resourcing, training and mentoring of the individual workers and the organisations for whom they work is in place in order for them to retain an advocacy focus and philosophy. Please refer to the option detailed below on resourcing and supporting the individual disability advocacy sector.
Regional Disability Advocacy – Toowoomba
Option: funding of an outreach disability advocacy worker in Toowoomba

Regional Disability Advocacy operate with a full time Disability Advocate and a part time Project 300 Disability Advocate. The Manager of the Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC), within which RDA is housed, provides management support to the workers, and TASC also provide administrative support when required.

The organisation provides advocacy support to residents of Toowoomba and to people living within a 40km radius of the town. It previously provided support to a greater geographical area, which was reduced in the previous service agreement with DSQ due to concerns regarding the sustainability of the regional circuit within existing resources. RDA have only recently employed a second worker with significant Project 300 funding coming to the agency.

RDA have put forward a comprehensive model of outreach support (appendix one) which details the use to which a regional and remote Disability Advocate could be put. They propose sharing resources with the Rural Women’s Outreach Legal Service which is also housed at TASC to complete a six weekly regional circuit encompassing Charleville, Chinchilla, Cunnamulla, Gatton, Goondiwindi, Miles, Roma, Pittsworth, Stanthorpe, St George, Tara, Warwick and Milmerran. In addition to face to face contact, the service proposes to make use of technology such as video-link conferencing which has been put into place in community centres across the region as part of the Legal Aid funded Rural Women’s Outreach Legal Service.

Funding for an outreach disability advocacy worker in Toowoomba would enable Regional Disability Advocacy to greatly expand their reach into a substantial number of small towns and localities across the south west of the state. The innovative use of technology and resource sharing proposed make this option very cost effective, and evaluation of the success of this position would provide extremely useful information for the development of individual advocacy across the state over time.

North West Advocacy – Mount Isa
Option: funding of an outreach disability advocacy worker in Mount Isa

North West Advocacy currently operate with one full time Coordinator, one full time rural and remote Advocacy Worker and one full time Advocacy Worker. The organisation currently covers a wide geographical area on a monthly basis. The advocacy worker drives alone through remote country and goes into some potentially unsafe situations in remote areas. There are issues of worker safety which need to be considered for this organisation.

The Coordinator does some of the remote work, which takes her away from the service for up to one week per month. NWA do not provide advocacy support to several key areas in their region, including Camooweal and Dajarra, due to lack of resources. They are aware of need in those areas.

There are around four months of the year where remote areas of the State serviced by NWA are inaccessible due to the wet season.

Funding for another rural and remote advocate would ensure the areas within the region which are currently unserved would receive monthly access to face to face
advocacy support. It would also enable the Coordinator of the service to meet some of the unmet need in Mount Isa and remain available at the service base to manage the operation of the organisation.

North West Advocacy should be encouraged to investigate links with the legal service which operates out of Mount Isa or one of the aboriginal services (if appropriate) for co-travelling to remote locations (as detailed in the Toowoomba option).

Rights in Action - Cairns
Option: funding of an outreach disability advocacy worker in Cairns

Rights in Action currently operate with one full time Coordinator, one part time Advocacy Worker and one part time Administrative Assistant. The organisation is funded to provide advocacy support within the Cairns City Council region and additionally to Yarrabah, an Aboriginal community one hour from Cairns. Rights in Action recently completed a twelve month access and equity project aiming to identify effective strategies to access and provide advocacy support to Yarrabah. They are in receipt of a small amount of funding through Project 300.

Rights in Action do not currently provide advocacy support to the Atherton Tablelands or the Mareeba area, although a significant amount of need has been identified through multiple sources in those areas.

The organisation has information and has made links into the Indigenous community at Yarrabah during the past twelve months. These links took several months to solidify, and are at risk of being lost if the service can't get back into the community regularly to follow up on the initial work they have done there. Due to the levels of unmet need for advocacy in the Cairns city region they are finding it difficult to maintain regular outreach work to Yarrabah.

An outreach Advocacy worker could re-invigorate the links into the Yarrabah community and also into the Atherton and Mareeba areas. While there is a need for advocacy in the Cape region, one advocacy worker is inadequate to effectively address that need.

Rights in Action should be encouraged to investigate links with the Disability Legal Advocacy Service within the Cairns Community Legal Centre for co-travelling to remote locations (as detailed in the Toowoomba option).

Mackay Advocacy
Option: funding of an outreach disability advocacy worker in Mackay

Mackay Advocacy currently operates with a full time Coordinator, and one part time Advocacy Worker. They currently provide advocacy support to people with mental illness and people with acquired brain injury. They are in receipt of a small amount of funding through Project 300.

The organisation provides advocacy support within Mackay.
There is a significant area around Mackay which has no access to advocacy support. Mackay Advocacy report frequent contact from people in Bowen, Proserpine, Sarina and as far as Rockhampton looking for advocacy. The areas of Emerald and Clermont are also without access to individual advocacy.

An outreach advocate would enable Mackay advocacy to greatly expand the number of people with disability to whom they provide support through a monthly regional circuit.

Any new funding to Mackay Advocacy should specify a broadening of scope to include all people with disability, rather than continue the current focus on people with mental illness and people with acquired brain injury.

Mackay Advocacy should be encouraged to investigate links with the community legal service which operates out of Mackay for co-travelling to remote locations (as detailed in the Toowoomba option).

Ipswich

Option: funding of an individual disability advocacy worker in Ipswich Tenancy Advocacy Services, Inc

A significant amount of work has gone into the development of advocacy in Ipswich through the Ipswich Region Advocacy Task Force, an unfunded coalition of individuals and agencies in the area. A model of advocacy provision has been developed and a submission for funding was put to DSQ in the last funding round.

Ipswich is an area of Queensland which has a high population of people with disability, many people in low socio economic conditions, a large number of privately operated hostels and boarding houses, and 5 prisons. It is an acknowledged ‘hot spot’ in need of structured responses to support many people with disability in crisis.

The model proposed by the Ipswich Region Advocacy Taskforce involves the set up of an advocacy organisation which conducts both individual and systemic advocacy, auspiced by Ipswich Tenancy Advocacy Services. The funds currently for distribution are for individual advocacy only.

While there is undoubtedly need for individual advocacy in Ipswich, the model proposed needs some refining and further development. Within the constraints of the funding available, it is not recommended that a new advocacy organisation be funded in Ipswich at this time.

The funding of an individual disability advocacy worker to be located within Ipswich Tenancy Advocacy Services is an option which would provide several benefits. Primary of these is access to advocacy for some people with disability in Ipswich. Other benefits include the collection of data on critical issues and unmet need in the area, development of a supportive community base for an individual advocacy organisation in the future, and networking and awareness raising with other community organisations in the area.
Isolation of this worker needs to be safeguarded against. The option for advocacy support and resourcing, below, provides a resource and safeguard to ensure the worker is linked in to a supportive advocacy network.

**Support and resourcing of existing and developing advocacy organisations**

*Option: Funding of an independent agency to resource and support the advocacy sector in Queensland.*

In keeping with the model currently being implemented in Victoria and in use in several countries overseas, the funding of an agency to support and resource the individual advocacy sector in Queensland is recommended. The options detailed above in this paper provide a path to increasing the strength of the advocacy sector through adequate operational funding and increasing the breadth and diversity of people with disability who receive advocacy support across the state. In order that these initiatives are underpinned by sound philosophical frameworks and strong operational and governance practices, there is a need for consistent and specialised support.

This option is recommended in order to buttress and support the options recommended to DSQ earlier in the paper – additional resources to existing advocacy services and new outreach advocacy positions in regional and rural areas of Queensland. The literature review conducted for the project highlighted several examples (detailed in the report) where this model is being used effectively in other states and countries.

New resources to boost the baseline funding of existing organisations and to enable advocacy workers to reach more remote people with disability will result in more people receiving advocacy. There is, however, a need to ensure that the organisational responsibilities and requirements are met effectively in all existing advocacy agencies. This includes governance, staff development, staff support, management committee support and training, and so on. The new funds are not targeted towards the development of expertise in these areas.

The fieldwork clearly shows that a number of individual advocacy organisations do not have sufficient capacity in either numbers of staff or staff expertise to make best use of available resources or to communicate with other agencies in order to build sufficient numbers to make application to the Disability Training Fund for training, particularly in regional areas.

The advocacy sector in Queensland also has little capacity to plan and evaluate their agencies due to the limited funding they receive. The time that they spend doing these activities takes workers away from the provision of direct advocacy to people with disability, thus reducing the number of people who can be supported by an agency each year. In regional and rural areas, there are few opportunities for mentoring and professional development for advocacy workers, particularly coordinators. This impacts on the capacity of the organisation to identify opportunities and respond to difficult and complex situations.
The funding of one agency to resource and support the advocacy sector in Queensland is a cost effective way for government to ensure that a baseline is being met for all agencies regarding their governance and training requirements. Such an agency would have the responsibility to:

- Facilitate access to training of staff, volunteers and management committees, using existing resources where possible (e.g., the Disability Sector Training Fund, QCOSS governance training) but with the discretion to either fund or provide training in response to need which is not available through existing channels.
- Encourage and support organisations to provide advocacy to groups of people with disability who are particularly underserved by advocacy in their area.
- Facilitate and further develop networking between agencies at management level, between service coordinators and between outreach advocacy workers.
- Promote good practice and information sharing across the sector.
- Provide mentoring support to advocacy workers and coordinators where required.
- Provide governance support to advocacy organisations where required.
- Provide guidance and support for thorough evaluation of advocacy organisations.
- Provide guidance and support for strategic planning of advocacy organisations.

The role outlined above is not advocacy development. However, over time it may be appropriate to consider providing additional funding for this agency to support the development of advocacy in communities, at both informal and formal levels.

The model proposed enables two workers to develop an extensive knowledge of the resources available in the broader community sector which advocacy services can make use of (such as QCOSS governance training). These workers should be also developing a plan to identify gaps in training and support, and have a small discretionary budget which would enable these identified needs to be met where generalist resources are not available and where they do not provide support to advocacy agencies themselves (for instance in the case of working with people with acquired brain injury).

It is advisable to place these two positions together, in order to ensure a team approach and to maximise the coverage of staff across the week. A systemic advocacy organisation may be willing to auspice this program and house these workers, which would be a structurally sound approach. Alternatively, one of the larger individual advocacy organisations may house them.

In addition to salary, consideration needs to be given to a discretionary training budget and travel budget.

Consideration needs to be given to the option of funding the existing Advocacy Development Network to undertake this role, or to tender the project out to a potentially new agency. It is anticipated that two part-time (30hrs) workers would be sufficient to fulfil this role effectively.

The Advocacy Development Network (ADN) which grew from a joint Commonwealth/State funded project in 1996 is currently working on organisational development, and has given consideration to business models and possible modes of operation. This group have experience with existing advocacy services, and are aware of the dynamics and critical issues within the sector. They are currently given
operational support by SUFY. While this option is not about advocacy development, it ties in with several of the aims of the ADN and they may be well placed to take up funding of two workers with a minimal amount of developmental work required.

Alternatively, the Combined Queensland Advocacy Groups could be approached for advice on where best to place these workers. QCOSS is another possibly appropriate agency to auspice this project if some distance from advocacy organisations is preferred.
Identifying gaps in individual disability advocacy across Queensland

Use of non-recurrent accumulated funds

A range of options to make effective use of non-recurrent funds which may have accumulated during the allocation period have been developed. Each of the options provide opportunities for in-depth investigation of issues of relevance to the whole Queensland advocacy sector.

Innovative use of technology

There are networks of videoconferencing facilities in community centres in some parts of the state which are funded by other government departments. Currently, there is no take up of these facilities by the advocacy sector. A research project to investigate opportunities for the advocacy sector to take up and use innovative technologies to supplement face to face advocacy in rural and remote areas would be of great benefit to people in rural and remote areas of the state.

Increasing reach to particular target groups of people with disability

Several groups of people with disability who are particularly under-served by advocacy organisations have been raised by groups across the state. Time limited, tightly focused research projects for advocacy organisations to develop strategies to increase advocacy to groups particularly marginalised in their communities would be very valuable. An expected focus would be around groups such as indigenous people with disability, people with disability from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with acquired brain injury. Rights in Action have recently conducted research on the needs of indigenous people with disability with positive results, and have subsequently increased the number and range of indigenous people with disability they support.

State wide research on issues of relevance to whole advocacy sector

Several respondents to this project identified the task of providing culturally appropriate and effective advocacy to indigenous people with disability as a challenge too big to address within the confines of the current budget allocation. There is a clearly identified need to make inroads in this area, but few strategies shared between organisations and individuals. A practical project which included the development of a resource manual would be a useful guide for advocacy workers.

Evaluation of new model of advocacy provision

The proposed outreach advocacy worker positions would benefit from an evaluation of the effectiveness of the positions following implementation of the model.

Sponsorship of an advocacy conference or sponsorship of attendance at national conference for advocacy workers

Advocacy development in underserved areas of Queensland

The small seeding grants for advocacy development which were provided several years ago were seen by the sector as a very positive use of a small amount of funds. The clear view of the sector is that advocacy organisations should not be funded without an extensive process of advocacy development occurring, so an agency starts in a supportive culture with maximum informal resources. Consideration should be given to providing small, non-recurrent seeding grants to gatherings of individuals who are working to create advocacy in their communities.
Long term considerations

Several important issues and considerations were raised during the data collection process of this project. These points are systemic in nature and have relevant beyond the current budget allocation for individual advocacy.

Need for a whole of government approach to funding individual advocacy
Many of the people using advocacy organisations have problems with services provided by (or the responsibility of) several government agencies, particularly the Departments of Housing, Health, Justice and Employment (both FACS and DEWAR). The Framework Implementation Committee would be an appropriate forum to consider the possibility of sharing funding responsibilities for funding disability advocacy across those agencies who have frequent engagement with people with disability.

Sharing of government resources and infrastructure
There are networks of videoconferencing facilities in community centres in some parts of the state which are funded by other government departments. One of the reasons the advocacy sector has not taken up use of these technologies is that they are funded by other departments, including Queensland Health and Legal Aid Queensland, and questions of payment for use of equipment, training in the use of equipment and promoting its availability among the community are unresolved.

Mapping and tracking
A schema to measure need of people with disability for advocacy support and to predict the likely growth of need across the state would be a valuable planning tool.

Development of a shared understanding of advocacy
The work currently underway between DSQ and the Queensland Combined Advocacy Groups on a plan for development of advocacy should underpin a shared understanding of advocacy between the sector and government.

Balance of advocacy models
Over time, disability advocacy needs to develop in a systemic way that encourages a balance of advocacy models to ensure people with disability have access to responsive advocacy in times of crisis and long term in depth advocacy support where required.

Creation of a receptive community
There will never be enough funded advocacy to meet the needs of all people with disability in Queensland. It is important to fund advocacy development which supports and resources families and others to advocate for people in their own networks and communities. We need to instil the idea that anyone who is in contact with people with disability has a right and a responsibility to advocate – the reality is that this is only formally recognised. We need a community that will respond.
References


Disability Services Queensland Strategic Plan 2004-08

Disability Services Queensland (2000) Disability Strategic Framework

Disability Services Queensland (2005) Discussion Paper No 1 Strategic Framework: Advocacy for People with a Disability in Queensland: Definitions, types, principles, goal and objectives of advocacy for people with a disability
