

CITIZEN ADVOCACY - SUNBURY & DISTRICTS Inc. NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

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Co-ordinators Report - September 2011

By the time you receive this newsletter, I will be in Canberra for the 5th International SRV Conference. Along with other colleagues from Victoria and around Australia, we will listen to speakers from around the world and be involved in workshops addressing the question of what it takes to secure 'The Good Life' for those who live lives apart from society. I look forward to sharing what I have learnt from this important conference and networking opportunity with you.

Our developing website is coming along nicely, with the joint effort of Farnham Street Neighborhood Learning Centre, our own Elizabeth Lynch and Melita Bonett. We look forward to seeing the finished product and having a launch to inform the community of this new resource.

Our A.G.M is scheduled towards the end of November and this year we plan to have a leading authority from Latrobe University talk on Autism and developments on the research and understanding of the condition. Further information will be forwarded to you as we confirm it.

Advocates in the program continue to do a magnificent job in supporting the person they are linked to. A small example of what people are doing in their advocacy role is listed in this newsletter. We endeavor to support advocates in this program once they are matched to a protégé and one way this was done recently was to have an Advocates dinner, held at the local Olive Tree Hotel. Those that could make it had an enjoyable time and a great meal. All were able to share stories and experiences that will ultimately strengthen their efforts in protecting their protégé's interests.



Advocate's catch up dinner, at the Olive Tree Hotel

Advocate and Office Volunteer Profile – *Noel Roberts*

I have been the office volunteer at Citizen Advocacy for the past 18 months.

For most of my past working life, I lived in the southern suburbs in Melbourne. For the majority of my career, I was a print broker (getting art work completed for various firms and then sourcing the best trade printer to print the job (e.g., cheques labels etc.)

With the proliferation of more businesses becoming computer reliant in the last 15 years, printing became a very difficult industry, so I entered a new career path of working amongst the physically disabled. This was extremely challenging, but rewarding to know you were putting a positive input into a need in society.



In 2006 I was diagnosed with Acute Myloid Leukemia and was only given days to live. I have pulled through and my wife and I moved to Romsey in 2008, a tree change, where we are very happy. I am the father of three adult children, two girls and a boy, and the grandfather of four.

It was great to come and work as a volunteer with David Abela. I am an advocate for Brendan and we have a good relationship. I find I am just as busy as when working fulltime and life is fulfilling and enjoyable.

Noel, with his protégé Brendan who is a keen Bombers supporter.

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCATE ACTION

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- Advocate continues to monitor the protégés' health and wellbeing and quality of life, after relocation from Caloola 17 years ago. Even though her protégé is in another part of Victoria, and is now suffering early onset dementia and rapid weight loss, the advocate attends all major meetings and communicates regularly with carers and allied health staff, bringing another valuable perspective and protection to her protégé, and monitoring important life decisions.
- Advocate is currently supporting a woman who is homeless and a chronic alcoholic. The protégés mental state, alcoholism and illiteracy makes her extremely vulnerable and non-compliant and although she has now moved from the "streets" to a house, she lives in extreme squalor. She continues to abuse alcohol and as result has major mental and physical health issues. Her advocate ensures she continues to receive the support services she requires, if she is has any hope of improving and returning to some type of a stable life. The advocate's encouragement and persistence has largely contributed to saving this woman's life. The Advocate consistently monitors his protégé state and progress through theism very difficult time.
- A protégé who is currently helping to care for her elderly mother at home, where they both live, is supported by her Advocate in practical ways. By ensuring necessary services are in place at home, monitoring stress levels and emotionally by taking her protégé out whilst someone else is at home with the protégés mother.
- Advocate monitors her protégé's accommodation in a S.R.S (Special Residential Service) after being moved to another area from Sunbury. A major review of the protégé's accommodation and social needs are currently underway after she absconded from the residential service twice in one day, ending up in the city from Melton!

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In the News...

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

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Julia Gillard announced a \$10 million plan for a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Disabilities cost the nation as much as \$13.6 billion a year with state governments doing the majority of the frontline work with federal funding assistance.

The Productivity commission released a report on the 10th of August advocating a non means tested National Disability Insurance Scheme and most welfare organizations support the scheme. The technical aspects of a NDIS were discussed with the states at a council of Australian Government meeting in late August

People with a disability, their families and carers know only too well the daily struggle for services and support, how often the system fails to deliver essential services. They know how often desperate families are left to fill the gaps. There is also huge inequity – people receive different levels of support depending on how, when and where their disability was acquired.

And the situation will only grow worse in the future. As the population ages, the number of people with a disability will increase. At the same time, the number of unpaid carers – family members and friends – willing and able to provide support will decrease. It is therefore time to take stock and plan for the future.

A National Disability Insurance Scheme represents a fundamental reform to the way services are funded and delivered. It is a social reform on the scale of the introduction of Medicare and compulsory superannuation – two safety nets now taken for granted by every Australian.

Grow Information Night

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On Tuesday 13th September GROW held an information night at the Citizen Advocacy office in Sunbury where, twelve people attended a valuable and informative presentation by the Co-ordinator, Julie-anne and a testimony from a participant of GROW. All involved had a wonderful evening, with much of the information and engaging discussions being a very useful tool for both protégés and advocates.

GROW is a national organization that provides a peer supported program for growth and personal development to people with a mental illness and those people experiencing difficulty in coping with life's challenges. The program is designed for people to take back control of their lives, overcome obstacles and start living a life full of meaning, hope and optimism.

GROW groups offer the opportunity for people to share challenges and solutions for recovery in a supportive and structured way. Participants are also able to attend education and training sessions and participate in a range of social activities. GROW is free to join and you don't need a referral or diagnosis. For further information or queries, please contact the GROW Program Co-ordinator, Juile-anne Dooley on 0405 61 70 72.

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