



NCOSS

NCOSS Conference Paper

Advocacy! *12 March 2003*

Advocacy with, advocacy by or advocacy for consumers

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Disability advocacy

- Social advocacy based in social model of disability
- Advocacy is inherently political, whether big p or little p
- locates the problem in the environment or society, as opposed to the ability or otherwise of the person with disability
- Compare to the medical model, which saw people as being impaired or disabled.
- Social model, promoted in UK, developed by Colin Barnes.
- Describes physical, cultural or attitudinal barriers which limit opportunities for pwd to participate
- Social advocacy seeks to address these barriers
- Advocacy seeks social change
- The objective of the advocacy is to change the attitude or remove the barrier, not to change the person with disability

Individual or systemic advocacy

- National Disability Advocacy Program
- Goal: to enable pwd to gain access to and participate in community life and to achieve and maintain their rights as citizens, involving their families wherever possible and appropriate
- Any other disadvantaged group (hint, besides children) where family involvement is mandated
- What does that say about the need for advocacy about attitudes to the independent rights of pwd
- National program is a mix of mostly individual and some systemic advocacy
- Funded to approx. \$12m per annum across Australia
- pwd comprise 20% of the population
- roles of individual and systemic advocacy are linked
- systemic advocacy priorities and issues are informed by individual advocacy
- systemic advocacy is considered to include education, representation, lobbying and research

Representation

- Goes hand in hand with advocacy
- Objective is the development, review or change to systems, via policy, practice or system design
- Self representation challenges the notion of people with disability or other marginalised groups as passive recipients of programs and policies
- Acknowledges the value of experience and use of systems
- The ability to critique programs, and in particular the useability and paths needed to fully access systems
- Nothing about us without us
- Acknowledges that expertise in the objectives and core components of support systems also lies with service users, challenge is to properly source that and combine that with policy and program design skills

Advocacy happens every day

- ❑ Objective is that people gain skills to self-advocate
- ❑ Consumer advocacy for individual or group outcomes gives skills and experience
- ❑ Notion of the market, “consumer” language, suggests need for use of that sort of advocacy but identifying the pressure/ response points in a different way.
- ❑ Skills needed include assertiveness, ability to understand and assess policy, developing and building networks and alliances, understanding dynamics
- ❑ Lot of these skills are developed through advocacy activity and use, learning what works and what doesn't, learning to scale responses appropriately

Working the system

- ❑ Requires an understanding of what the system is and where the points of influence are, and when they occur.
- ❑ Understanding the tools available and choosing which to use
 - Internal complaints
 - External complaints
 - Media
 - Political lobbying
 - Direct action
 - Legal action
- ❑ Understanding the political environment, allies and the opposition
 - Elections
 - Bureaucratic versus political action
 - Use of research, evidence
 - Parliamentary processes of review, oversight eg budget estimates
 - Casual or issue based coalitions
 - Risk assessment or management eg civil liability campaign
 - Opportunism
- ❑ Strategising
 - Campaign planning
 - Risk assessment
 - Allies
 - Media
 - Roles