Report of the Independent Evaluation of

CITIZEN ADVOCACY SOUTH AUSTRALIA (INC.)

Conducted from
10 September – 14 September 2011

Based on
CAPE:
STANDARDS FOR
CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAM EVALUATION

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PART ONE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION OF CITIZEN ADVOCACY SOUTH AUSTRALIA (INC.)

1.1 Introduction

At the invitation of the Board of Management of Citizen Advocacy South Australia (CASA) Inc., an external evaluation of the program was held from 10 September to 14 September 2011 (inclusive). A team comprising six people independent of CASA (see Appendix B for team-member profiles) conducted the evaluation. In reviewing the work of the program, the evaluation team used the CAPE: Standards for Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation manual1 (hereafter referred to as the CAPE manual or tool), by John O’Brien and Wolf Wolfensberger.

On Friday, 9 September 2011, as a prelude to the evaluation, the team leader, Tom Doody, presented a one-day event, Understanding Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation. The evaluation began on Saturday, 10 September ’11, continued in the ensuing days, and concluded on Wednesday, 14 September ’11. In the late afternoon of Wednesday, 14 September, the team leader provided verbal feedback of the team’s assessment to CASA’s board of management and staff.

This report is a written record of the findings of the evaluation team.

1.2 The concept of, and need for, Citizen Advocacy (CA)

Citizen Advocacy (CA) was conceptualised and evolved by Dr Wolf Wolfensberger in the United States in the late 1960s. Citizen Advocacy was developed for at least the following reasons, namely that many people with impairments or who are otherwise marginalised:

(i) need assistance with the practical affairs of everyday life;
(ii) require protection and advocacy because they are held in low esteem by and in society, and are likely to encounter recurring “wounding” life experiences including rejection, exploitation, abuse, etc.;
(iii) are clients of paid services that are typically mired in conflicts of interest;
(iv) do not have freely-given, personal relationships;
(v) are often less able to speak up to represent their own interests, and even more commonly, are not listened to when they do speak up;
(vi) are often segregated and congregated in human service programs, and need sponsorship/mentoring to become more adaptively engaged in the mainstream of community life.

Although there have been various definitions and descriptions of Citizen Advocacy, the formulation by the International Citizen Advocacy Safeguards Group (October 1990) is probably the best elaborated and explicated statement of the concept of CA:

Citizen Advocacy is a means to promote, protect, and defend the welfare and interests of, and justice for, persons who are impaired in competence, or diminished in status, or seriously

physically or socially isolated, through one-to-one (or near one-to-one) unpaid voluntary commitments made to them by people of relevant competencies.

Citizen advocates strive to represent the interests of a person as if they were the advocate’s own; therefore, the advocates are supported, and usually recruited, by a Citizen Advocacy office with paid staff that is so funded and governed as to be essentially free of conflicts of interest.

In consultation with the Citizen Advocacy office, advocates choose from a wide range of functions and roles. Some of these commitments may last for life.

1.3 A brief profile of Citizen Advocacy South Australia (CASA)

Citizen Advocacy South Australia facilitates personal advocacy engagements for people deemed to have an intellectual disability (“protégés”) by recruiting, orienting, and supporting members of the community (“citizen advocates”) who are matched with, and respond to the needs of, such persons. The program is exclusively engaged in the provision of Citizen Advocacy, and does not co-provide other forms of advocacy or other services.

The program began operation as Citizen Advocacy North East in October 1986, before an eventual change of name. The history of CASA can be found in other publications (for example, in the 2005 evaluation report), and will not be recalled in this report. Readers who are interested to learn more about the history of the program are urged to consult such other publications.

At the time of the evaluation, CASA was overseen by a board of management comprising 6 members. The board employs 4 staff, 3 of whom are office-based: Rosey Olbrycht (program manager), Indra Reinpuu (co-ordinator), and Glenys Videon (administrative officer). Rosey has been a long-term staff member of CASA, and assumed the role of program manager formerly held by Patrick Ruthven, who left at the end of June 2011. Indra joined the program at the end of August 2011. Glenys has been employed in her current role since 2005.

The program supports 67 protégé/advocate relationships. It is funded by the Federal Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

CASA was first evaluated in August 1989, using the Learning from Citizen Advocacy Programs tool. Subsequent evaluations, based on the CAPE manual, were held in the following years: 1993, 1996, 2005, and 2009.

1.4 The purpose of the evaluation

The overriding purpose of the evaluation was to: assess the work of the Citizen Advocacy South Australia program, according to the standards defined in the CAPE manual; determine the overall status of the program; and provide honest and constructive feedback of the findings. Typically, inter alia, evaluations using the CAPE tool affirm the program’s strengths, identify limitations and issues that require address, and provide recommendations and direction for program improvement.

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Evaluation provides the occasion and opportunity to review and renew: the task of reviewing is entrusted to the evaluation team, and the responsibility of renewing is assumed by the program. Without regular review and renewal, a program can become ossified in its mindset and practice. And, of course, ossification is usually preceded by complacency. Independent evaluation, therefore, can crack the cocoon of complacency that often descends on a program or any other human endeavour that shuns scrutiny. Indeed, historically, external evaluation conducted periodically has proven to be one of the most effective means of safeguarding and strengthening the integrity of a Citizen Advocacy program and its work.

It is worth emphasising, however, that the purpose of the evaluation was not to assess and rate, on a match-by-match basis, the protégé/advocate relationships arranged and supported by Citizen Advocacy South Australia. Relationship-specific qualitative information, gained from protégé/advocate interviews and associated documentation, is of enormous importance, but its relevance and implications are framed in the context of the work of the Citizen Advocacy office, whose performance is the object of the evaluation.

1.5 A brief description of the CAPE manual as a tool for evaluation

The CAPE manual is divided into three sections:
(i) **Adherence to Citizen Advocacy Principles**
(ii) **CA Office Effectiveness**
(iii) **Program Continuity and Stability**

Section one, *Adherence to Citizen Advocacy Principles*, relates to identity of the program; section two, *CA Office Effectiveness*, relates to quality of the functions of the CA office, namely the “key activities” of arranging and supporting protégé/advocate matches; and section three, *Program Continuity and Stability*, relates to the viability of the program.

The CAPE manual has a total of 36 “ratings”: 20 of which are specific to the principles, another 10 that are specific to CA office effectiveness, with the remaining 6 pertaining to program continuity and stability. For each rating, a range of levels of quality are given, so that based on the relevant evidence gathered during the evaluation, the team can assign that level which best characterises the performance of the program.

The levels assigned to each of the ratings are included, in the context of the assessment of the program’s performance in relation to the specific rating(s) within the body of the report, as well as at its end (Appendix A).

1.6 The content and process of the evaluation

In the first part of the evaluation process, for the three (of the five) days, the team—as a whole and in sub-teams of two—embarked on gathering information from a range of sources. The process primarily comprised the following tasks.

**Interviewing:**
- 34 citizen advocates and 20 protégés
- All (6) members of the board of management
- The program manager, co-ordinator, and administrative officer
Various other people who have been involved in the program, such as the former program manager (who was interviewed prior to the evaluation), and a former advocate and current member of the key office activities sub-committee.

Reviewing written information, including:
- Protégé/advocate relationship files
- Internal relationship review documentation
- Annual protégé and advocate recruitment plans
- Advocate orientation materials
- Newsletters
- Publicity and promotional materials
- Program policies and procedures
- Records of board and sub-committee meetings

In the second part of the process, the information gleaned was then systematically analysed in a prescribed format referred to as “conciliation,” which was conducted over the last two days of the evaluation. During conciliation, the team engaged in extensive sharing and analysis of the evidence gathered to measure the performance of the program, as delineated in the 36 ratings of the CAPE manual. Additionally, the team distilled the overriding themes of the program (see part two of this report) that arose from—or were related to—the ratings analysis, but also in some instances, transcended the ambit of specific ratings.

Accordingly, the verbal feedback provided to the board and staff, on Wednesday, 14 September, represented a summary of the team’s findings.

The team estimates that it spent 27.75 hours interviewing advocates and/or protégés and others involved in the program, 10 hours interviewing the office staff, and a further 20 hours engaging in the aforementioned conciliation process.

1.7 Some caveats and qualifications about the evaluation and this report

The verbal feedback and this report represent the major findings of the evaluation team. The team believes the evaluation process has been comprehensive, but it cannot be exhaustive. After all, given the duration of the evaluation—relative to the information that can conceivably be gathered and analysed—not all that is knowable and assessable about the work of CASA became known to, and was assessed by, the team. That would be impossible. Nonetheless, the team is confident that the substance of its findings offers insight into the current status of the program.

This evaluation report is not intended to be a freestanding document. Those who may not have sufficient pre-existing knowledge of Citizen Advocacy—and to whom certain concepts and practices discussed herein may not be self-explanatory—are encouraged to also refer to the CAPE manual, which can be helpful in elucidating or elaborating on such concepts and practices.

The reader may also notice that there is some overlap or repetition in the issues discussed and the recommendations provided. Some overlap is inevitable, given that certain issues span several themes and ratings. Nevertheless, it is hoped that occasional repetition is acceptable and even desirable, rather than discordant, if it can lend due emphasis to some themes or issues.
PART TWO
CELEBRATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND CHANGE:
OVERRIDING THEMES IDENTIFIED
BY THE EVALUATION TEAM

In light of the history and work of Citizen Advocacy South Australia, the narrative of this report can be encapsulated by the “three Cs”: the importance of celebration, consolidation, and change. These three elements permeate the findings of the team, as discussed below.

2.1 The program has a strong foundation in place, which is serving it well

An observation of the historical trajectory of Citizen Advocacy South Australia reveals that, in the last 10-plus years, the program has worked hard to build a strong foundation for undertaking its mission of facilitating advocacy relationships. Many necessary structures for operating a Citizen Advocacy program are in place, and are working well. For example, the board of management and some sub-committees play an active role in the functioning of the program. As well, all of the (7) key activities of matching and supporting relationships are entrenched practices, with the concomitant result that matches continue to be made and supported.

CASA’s now-solid foundation is manifested in the many strengths of the program, such as the following.

2.1.1 The matches made and supported by the program

The heart of any Citizen Advocacy program is its protégé/advocate relationships, and Citizen Advocacy South Australia has initiated matches that are life-improving for people with disabilities who are recruited as protégés. The evaluation team met with people who represented many good—even lyrical—matches, whose commitment registered and resonated powerfully with team members. In the process, we collected some quotations from the protégés and advocates, which are reproduced verbatim.

From protégés:
- “[Advocate] cares” and “is more than a friend.”
- “[Advocate] is a nice lady; she’s my friend and I trust her.”
- “I like [advocate].”
- “[Advocate] is like an older brother.”
- “I’m proud of [advocate] for hanging in there.”

From advocates:
- “[Protégé] is a lovable person.”
- “…to be there for [protégé]. He can do a lot more than he thinks he can.”
- “I am one of [protégé’s] ‘dads’.”
- “[Protégé] is my friend.”
- “Our relationship will continue with or without the (Citizen Advocacy) office.”
2.1.2 Fidelity to the Citizen Advocacy model

Citizen Advocacy South Australia continues to demonstrate steadfastness to the Citizen Advocacy model. The evaluation team noted the program’s understanding of, and adherence to, the principles and practices of Citizen Advocacy. Board members and staff strive to deepen their knowledge of Citizen Advocacy by availing themselves of training opportunities, including participation in evaluations of other CA programs using the CAPE methodology. And, of course, CASA itself has commendably submitted itself to regular, external reviews.

It is a telling point that, in the course of the evaluation, team members did not need to engage in debate about whether CASA was a Citizen Advocacy program—actually, or just nominally. The program’s identity was clear.

*Without reservation or qualification, we can state that Citizen Advocacy South Australia is a Citizen Advocacy program.*

2.1.3 The commitment of the office staff and board of management to Citizen Advocacy

The office staff and the board of management of CASA exude a fervent belief in, and unwavering commitment to, Citizen Advocacy as a response to the situation of people with disabilities.

As program manager, Rosey wears Citizen Advocacy on her sleeve, and the authenticity of her beliefs and actions is inspiring. Her contribution to the program has been invaluable.

Indra, although new to Citizen Advocacy, impressed the team with his thoughtful responses to questions and his desire to embrace CA. We are confident that, as co-ordinator, he will be an asset to the program.

The administrative support provided by Glenys has been vital to the functioning of the Citizen Advocacy office. Despite working part-time, she has been admirably adaptable to the flexibility of schedule expected of her role.

At the level of the board of management, too, members assume their role with seriousness and sincerity. That the majority of the board is comprised of long-serving members (and advocates) is a testament to their commitment. Even though there have been disagreements between board members about program aspirations and courses of action, the shared belief in of the importance of Citizen Advocacy has remained strong, and has served as the glue holding program leadership together in their work.

2.1.4 The experience and expertise of the office staff and board of management

A brief but related theme to those mentioned above is that there is now a reservoir of experience and expertise amongst the staff and board of Citizen Advocacy South Australia. Collectively, the experience of the leadership of the program in the work of Citizen Advocacy is impressively considerable. Also, as stated previously, there has been has been a cultivated culture of learning, with staff and board members maintaining the tradition of
attending and participating in training in Citizen Advocacy and related events (for example, Social Role Valorisation workshops).

This pool of knowledge and experience serves as an important safeguard to the program, given that there are invariably forces whose net effect can be to divert or dilute the mission of Citizen Advocacy—a theme that is discussed in the next section of this report.

2.2 There are mindsets and practices that are impacting on program functioning, some of which are deeply embedded but require remedial change

Naturally, the strengths of Citizen Advocacy South Australia are worth celebrating and conserving. However, the evaluation team also identified certain mindsets or practices at CASA that are weakening the program’s capacity to arrange and support matches. Some of these have their source in external forces, and others emanate from within the program. Regardless of the source, remedial steps to be taken vary from “simply” ceasing to engage in some practices (whether immediately or gradually); to implementing certain action-oriented initiatives; to tweaking largely good practices to consolidate their efficacy.

2.2.1 A drift towards increasing formalisation and bureaucratisation

Citizen Advocacy is an intentional effort to bring together and support people who otherwise would not naturally meet and form advocacy relationships. Citizen Advocacy is, therefore, a necessarily organised—but not an unduly formalised—way for relationships to occur. Indeed, excessive formalisation is antithetical to the nature of Citizen Advocacy, and thus any necessary formality should be pared to the bone.

The evaluation team concluded that Citizen Advocacy South Australia is becoming an overly formalised and bureaucratised organisation, and that such a cultural shift is distracting and debilitating for the program. At least, in part, a formalised culture can be attributed to funding requirements of the program. For example, in adhering to the stipulations of the program’s funder, the Federal Government, all protégés and advocates must sign forms before any matching can proceed. In addition, the program has to contend with all sorts of government-imposed reporting requirements, many of which have no or only tangential relevance to Citizen Advocacy, and are even imperilling its capacity to effectively fulfil its mission.

In drawing attention to such bureaucratising practices, the team acknowledges the reality that CASA must comply with the conditions of its funding contract in order to continue receiving funds. However, given that the process is sucking up the oxygen of the CA office, the team suggests that the program respond to government funding requirements with absolutely minimal effort and energy, whilst finding creative ways to attenuate the detrimental impact of some of these requirements on the core mission of Citizen Advocacy.

Furthermore, the program itself is capable and culpable of confected formality. For example, it has a propensity to self-generate an inordinate amount of documentation. There is a long-established practice of producing voluminous paperwork, at least some of which—in the team’s opinion—is superfluous. It is our observation that the program has been habitually indiscriminate in the process of collecting and compiling all kinds of data, and recording and reporting on all manner of deliberations. However, we believe it is neither necessary nor
desirable for everything, especially the minutiae of program matters, to be committed to paper. Indeed, copious documentation can be overwhelming to the point at which it can obscure or distort the real or the big picture of a given situation.

On the whole, unwarranted formalisation of the work of Citizen Advocacy has practical and image implications. Practically, it is time- and energy-consuming, and is an inefficient use of the office’s resources. Additionally, it courts the danger that Citizen Advocacy will be imaged as yet another human service, and not a community- and relationship-based advocacy program. Derivatively, it can lead to protégés and advocates of the program looking—and possibly even acting—like human service clients and unpaid (quasi-)service providers, respectively.

Another example of encroaching formalisation, which can interpret protégés as clients of CASA who are receiving a service, is in the provision of follow-along and support to some matches. Although not a serious and consistent transgression, in their contact with some advocates and protégés, office staff are inadvertently becoming involved as participants in, rather than facilitators of, these relationships. When staff unwittingly and unwarrantably become involved in the relationships, there can be a number of consequences. If the staff become (or seem to be) too close to the protégé, the protégé may perceive the staff member(s) as the advocate, or at least central to the relationship. If the staff become too close to the advocate, the advocate may defer to the staff member(s), rather than independently act in the perceived interests of the protégé. These implications are discussed further in part three of this report. In the context of this theme, however, we simply want to point out that undue involvement by the staff in matches can depict the CA office as a service, which characteristically manages people who are in traditional volunteer relationships.

Ultimately, then, if anything associated with matching and supporting relationships is to be punctuated with contrived procedures, it adds an unnecessary layer of formality that can denaturalise the ordinariness of these relationships. Of course, in making this contention, the team readily recognises that a Citizen Advocacy program must operate within a systematic framework; however, a systematised way of working does not have to become a “service-ised” way of working.

2.2.2 The challenge of translating passive plans into action-oriented strategies

Another practice that requires attention is the way in which Citizen Advocacy South Australia formulates and implements some of its plans. The evaluation team saw evidence of planning and of plans: most of which written, but some merely discussed. That the program invests time in planning its work is commendable. For example, the program customarily and carefully formulates its annual protégé and advocate recruitment plan over the course of three days.

Nonetheless, a challenge for the program is to ensure that any formulated plans serve as blueprints for action. Plans that exist but fail to be activated are of little value. Human services are infamous for their idolatry of the passive plan, whose stillbirth means that the plan becomes the end in itself, and not the means to an end.

Currently, to counterbalance planning with performing, CASA needs to convert seemingly amorphous plans into tangible actions. At least in regard to some of the plans that the team examined, there appeared to be an absence of, or insufficient clarity about, crucial action-
oriented details; notably the precise what, who, how, and by when components of the plans. Without these elements to describe and track program plans, such plans may never come to fruition or may be poorly implemented.

2.2.3 The refinement of protégé profiles to improve the matching process

Protégé recruitment has been described as a foundational activity because it typically informs the ensuing steps of recruiting, orienting and matching an advocate with the protégé. Central to the task of protégé recruitment is identifying the specific needs of the protégé that can conceivably be addressed by an advocate with the relevant identity and skills. The needs of the protégé, therefore, must be the recurring point of reference on the road to finding an advocate to introduce to the protégé. If the Citizen Advocacy office is not sufficiently clear about the needs and issues of the protégé, it can throw the needle of the advocate recruitment compass off its course, making it difficult to reach the destination of a good match.

CASA staff take the time and make the effort to identify the needs of people recruited as protégés, in order to find suitable advocates for them. For instance, protégé profiles describe the perceived needs of the person, and correspondingly the qualities sought in the advocate for that person, and the potential roles that the advocate can assume in the match.

The evaluation team feels that the protégé profiles prepared by the staff could be improved to bring greater clarity to the matching process. Specifically, we think that the identification of protégé needs could be sharpened in a way that will provide focussed direction to the flow-on, sequential steps of advocate recruitment, orientation, and matching. At present, it would seem that protégé profiles do not consistently express the needs and vulnerabilities of the protégé with sufficient clarity, specificity, and depth. We suspect that sharpening the protégé profiles will organically lead to more incisive conceptualisation and communication of advocate roles and expectations.

In alerting the program to this issue, the team does not want to overstate its significance: we are not asserting that there are serious and serial limitations in the matching process; only that fine-tuning protégé profiles will further illuminate the needs of the protégé and the relevant characteristics and roles of the advocate. Also, we think that addressing this issue is not merely about gathering more information about the protégé—although in some instances, more factual details about the person would have been helpful—but about reflecting deeply on the person’s existential situation, particularly in the context of the “wounding” taught in Social Role Valorisation events, which can yield a clearer and deeper understanding of his/her needs and circumstances. (Also see R21Vision and creativity of protégé recruitment on page 22.)

2.2.4 Delineation of the role and responsibilities of the board of management, especially vis-à-vis those of the office staff

Observation of the performance of the governing boards of community organisations does not always lend itself to a simplistic, active-or-passive, binary characterisation of the way in which they discharge their responsibilities. That is, it can sometimes be difficult to conclude whether a board is, overall, either too active or too passive in the running of the organisation. In the case of Citizen Advocacy South Australia, it would seem that the conduct of the board of management has been a reaction to, and reflection of, some complex board/staff and staff/staff dynamics.
Any analysis of board/staff relations of CASA requires acknowledgement of some historical factors. However, in offering the evaluation team’s perspective, we would like to preface this section with the declaration that our purpose is not be accusatory of any individual(s), but to be descriptive of the situation—as we perceive it.

There is no doubt that the former program manager, Patrick Ruthven, by sheer force of his personality, commitment, and work ethic, had been a dominant influence in the operation of the program. Whether intended or not, Patrick became the main conduit through which discussions and decision-making occurred. Circumstantially, in the team’s opinion, the board became reliant on and even deferential to him in defining and prioritising program matters. As well, another issue that has compounded the situation has been staff/staff tensions, which has compelled members of the board to intervene and even assume supervisory roles on some occasions.

The above dynamics, we would suggest, are at least partly attributable for the blurring of role definition—leading to instances of board members, paradoxically, under-performing as well as over-stepping in their roles. An example of the former is in the area of board-member recruitment, which has not traditionally been the role of the board of CASA. However, the team was heartened to learn that, more recently, the board has begun to assume that responsibility. Naturally, we encourage the board to continue this practice.

In light of the foregoing, it is timely for the board to review and (re-)define its role and responsibilities. Without clear role definition, there will continue to be problems in terms of demarcation and diffusion of responsibility. It warrants repeating that, in making its observation, the team is not intending to engage in admonitory finger-wagging, but to state the issues and offer possible prescriptions.

To that end, we think that it might be helpful if the board makes a distinction between governing and managing an organisation. Governance is about oversight and stewardship of the program, whereas management can imply extending the ambit of responsibility to managing the activities of the office. In differentiating between governing and managing, there is no inference that a board that governs relinquishes its decision-making authority. Unequivocally, the decision-making authority must ultimately reside and remain with the board. Nonetheless, once clear lines of understanding are drawn between the role of the board and that of staff, the pie of responsibility for tasks can be carved up more cleanly to facilitate decision-making. Conceivably, the board then may choose to delegate more tasks to the staff and/or sub-committees, whose brief is to report and recommend on designated matters—the basis of which should inform, but not commit, the board in deciding on the desired course of action. Delegation does not mean disengagement.

In offering the above insights, it is not the intention of the team to simply remind the board of the processes with which it may already be familiar, but to reinforce the need to be clear about the question of who legitimately decides and who legitimately does. We sense that board deliberations are currently an unnecessarily tortuous and protracted process, which may explain the characteristically long monthly board meetings. Accordingly, it would be strategic for the board to investigate governance arrangements that provide clear guidelines for the conduct of business, and which are compatible with the nature of Citizen Advocacy.
2.3 The program is in the midst of change, which is desirably providing an unrivalled opportunity to initiate further changes

In it history, Citizen Advocacy South Australia has been forced to grapple with many difficult and divisive issues, even ones that have imperilled its very existence. Yet the program has been able to address any number of radioactive issues, and often emerge more resilient by doing so. It is helpful to remember the tenacity of the program, especially in times of adversity or uncertainty.

In the last six months or so, CASA has undergone a painful period of transition. The resignation of Patrick from the position of program manager, and the eventual hiring of Rosey to assume that role, has not been a smooth process. Indeed, it has been something of an emotional earthquake, with fissures of tension appearing between and amongst the board and staff.

However, the evaluation team was pleased to hear that the situation is now stabilising, with the program leadership displaying a genuine desire to put aside past events and focus on the future. Whilst discarding emotional baggage is a healthy response, there also needs to be recognition that the program is in a time of change, which is also providing an opportunity for change.

It is important for the team to clarify and qualify the kind of change to which it is referring, and which should be initiated. In and of itself, change is not good, especially if what is good is to be changed. There is much about CASA that is worth celebrating (including those characteristics that are described in section 2.1 above), and which need to be resolutely retained. Obviously, therefore, we are not suggesting that there needs to be a root-and-branch overhaul of the way in which the program operates. However, especially with the recent changes of Rosey assuming the role of program manager, and Indra being hired for the role of co-ordinator, it is timely to critically review and revamp certain practices. Most of these practices have been discussed in the previous section of this report; consequently, below, attention is given to some recommendations.

2.4 Recommendations that are relevant, but not exclusive, to this section of the report

In the next part of this report (CAPE ratings-specific assessment), recommendations are provided that are specific and contextual to the individual ratings. The recommendations offered in this section, on the other hand, are largely confined to the themes and issues discussed above (although there is some overlap between the two sets of recommendations).

Before particularising the recommendations, the team would like to invite the program to reflect on the following suggestions about, or in the context of, change:

- Open your hearts and minds to change, and to the opportunity and need for positive change.

- Acknowledge that certain changes are desirable, or even necessary. Acknowledgment is a prerequisite to initiating change.
Be clear, also, about the things that should not be changed. Preserve these things and do not let other (needed) change processes spill over onto, and therefore disrupt, practices that should be continued.

Consider factors such as urgency, gravity, and degree of difficulty, when addressing issues. Certain issues, for example, although significant, may be addressed simply and immediately by cessation of the practice.

Regulate the mode and pace of addressing issues according to determined priorities. For example, it may be advisable to “chunkify” the task: to segment it into manageable portions that are then addressed sequentially. Or, consider addressing issues that are programmatic and administrative concurrently; for instance, one in each of the two domains in a given time.

Recommendations:

(Note: the following recommendations are not ranked in order of importance or priority.)

“De-bureaucratise” the culture and the operation of the program. In practical terms, examples of measures include: reducing, and even eliminating, (some) documentation; finding ways to minimise practices that image the program as another human service and the protégés as clients of the service; and abbreviating the content and duration of (especially) monthly board of management meetings.

Systematically orient Indra to the principles and practices of Citizen Advocacy. At the same time, care should be taken to ensure that he is not enculturated, through osmosis, into a pre-existing mindset or habit of working that is unnecessary or inefficient; for example, effort should be made to prevent him from becoming socialised into the aforementioned practice of producing copious paperwork. We would also recommend that the program strive to arrange at least one or two matches before Rosey goes on long-service leave, so that Indra can gain that practical experience of working alongside her in the process. That way, Indra will be better placed to continue making matches during Rosey’s absence.

Resolve to formulate plans that are action-oriented and outcome-conducive. The what, who, how, and by when components must be embedded into the plans. A starting point might be to refine and reactivate plans to secure suitable sources of non-government funding.

Sharpen protégé profiles so that they lend themselves to easier identification of protégé needs, and definition of relevant advocate characteristics and roles, which will then inform advocate recruitment, orientation, and matching.

Review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the board of management, with particular reference to the practical implications of differentiating between governing and managing the program. Furthermore, explore governance arrangements that provide clear guidelines for the conduct of organisational business, and which are compatible with the nature of Citizen Advocacy.
PART THREE
CAPE RATINGS-SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

3.1 Adherence to Citizen Advocacy Principles
(20 ratings related to the identity of the Citizen Advocacy program)

The Citizen Advocacy principles:

- Advocate Independence
  - Unpaid roles
  - Loyalty to protégés

- Program Independence
  - Independent administration and location
  - CA program separation from direct service
  - Independent CA office location

- Clarity of Staff Function
  - Focus of staff role definition
  - Staff independence from other advocacy forms
  - Ties to the Citizen Advocacy movement

- Balanced Orientation to Protégé Needs
  - Protégé characteristics
  - Diversity of advocacy roles

- Positive Interpretations of Handicapped People

Principle One: Advocate Independence

CAPE rating R111: Unpaid roles

Assessment of the evaluation team

Advocates recruited by the program do not receive any monetary payment or other forms of compensation for their advocacy engagement. The team commends CASA in ensuring that the role of advocates remains strictly unpaid, at a time when the Federal Government, which funds most Citizen Advocacy programs, has succeeded in genetically modifying many CA programs that are recipients of its funding by imposing a paid advocacy component to their work, thereby altering their identity.

Level assigned to rating

R111: Unpaid roles  (-) 1 2 3 4 (+)

Recommendation

Maintain consciousness of the need for, and affirm commitment to, recruiting advocates whose engagements are strictly unpaid.
CAPE rating

R11211: Internal promotion [of advocate loyalty to protégés by the Citizen Advocacy office]
R11212: External promotion [of advocate loyalty to protégés by the Citizen Advocacy office]
R1122: Advocate practice [of loyalty to protégés]

Assessment of the evaluation team

Internal promotion: the importance of loyalty to protégés is communicated to advocates by the Citizen Advocacy office in a number of ways; for instance, in orientation and in written material distributed to advocates. However, the team would like to offer some observations that would suggest the need for the CA office to place greater emphasis in promoting advocate loyalty to protégés.

(a) The unduly high level of involvement of CA office staff in some matches risks the possibility of subtly shifting the loyalty of the advocate away from their protégé to the office staff, with whom some advocates have become particularly close. The implication for loyalty to protégés is this: in the event that an advocate disagrees with the CA office about a goal or course of action regarding the protégé, the advocate may reflexively defer to the opinion of the office staff (even without displays of insistence from office staff), rather than remaining loyal to the protégé by pursuing that which the advocate perceives to be in the interests of the protégé.

(b) The team was left with the impression that some advocates were not sufficiently clear that loyalty to their protégés necessarily meant being independent from, and not beholden to, service providers of their protégés.

External promotion: in the recent past, the CA office has made an effort to approach and explain the nature of Citizen Advocacy, and the role and loyalty of advocates, to service-providing agencies whose clients are, or may become, protégés matched with advocates. The team agrees that it is important to clarify the independence of the CA program, and of the individual advocates, to external parties such as service providers and families of protégés.

In consistently promoting that message, the team also believes that the program needs to dispel any ambiguity about advocate loyalty, in its policy and practice in dealing with complaints about advocates by external parties. We refer specifically to an incident in which a service agency complained to the CA office about the conduct of an advocate. Our understanding of the ensuing process is that ultimately the program manager investigated the complaint, rather than directing the service provider to an independent body empowered to address such grievances. Clearly, we are not suggesting that the Citizen Advocacy office should be dismissive of a complaint or the complainant, which may be interpreted as indifference to, or retreat from, the issue that has been brought to its attention. However, the action of the CA office, by directly involving itself in the dispute, can invite the perception that the advocate is answerable to, and not independent of, the office.

Advocate practice: the team heard about many instances of advocates taking actions that reflected loyalty to their protégés, including some examples of advocates disagreeing with the Citizen Advocacy office staff about the nature of protégé needs, or how to address them; and advocates incurring personal costs in pursuing the interests of their protégés. At the same time, the team learnt about some matches in which a relevant response from the advocates—
particularly spokesmanship—had not been forthcoming, or at least not with proportionate vigour, an issue that is also discussed in R1413 Protégé need for spokesmanship to defend human and legal rights on page 18.

Level assigned to ratings

R11211: Internal promotion  (-) 1 2 3 4 (+)
R11212: External promotion  1 2 3 4
R1122: Advocate practice  1 2 3 4 5

Recommendations

Review and recalibrate the involvement of CA office staff in matches so that advocate loyalty to protégé is not undermined.

Emphasise and reinforce—in advocate orientation, match letters, and other contact with advocates—advocate independence from others parties, including the Citizen Advocacy office, families of protégés, and especially agencies that currently (or can potentially) provide services to protégés.

Seek clarity and consistency in responding to complaints made about advocates, so that the response of the Citizen Advocacy office does not undermine advocate independence and loyalty to protégé.

Principle Two: Program Independence

CAPE rating R1211: CA program separation from direct service
R1212: Independent CA office location
R122: Independence of funding sources

Assessment of the evaluation team

CA program separation from direct service: Citizen Advocacy South Australia is constituted as an independent entity, whose mission is to exclusively operate a Citizen Advocacy program. CASA is not under the administrative or governance control of another (service-providing or otherwise) organisation.

Neither the CA office staff nor members of the board of management have ties to service-providing agencies whose clients are current or potential protégés. Furthermore, there is high consciousness amongst the staff and the board about the issue of conflict of interest and its implications for the independence and potency of advocacy provided by individual advocates.

Independent CA office location: The location of the office of Citizen Advocacy South Australia reflects the independence of the program. The office neither shares office space with, nor is it proximal to, agencies that presently (or can potentially) serve protégés.

Independence of funding sources: Citizen Advocacy South Australia receives all of its funding from the Federal Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). The team acknowledges that FaHCSIA is one step removed in the conflict-of-interest scenario in the sense that it is not a
main provider or funder of services for the class of people (those with disabilities) for whom CASA recruits advocates. For example, accommodation services—which have the most far-reaching purview and control over clients’ lives, and are therefore, relatively speaking, most likely to be the kind of services that advocates have cause to confront on behalf of their protégés—are funded by state governments. Nonetheless, this “one degree of separation” does not confer sufficient immunity for the CA program. After all, FaHCSIA does fund certain other services, such as employment services for people with disabilities, allowing for the possibility that the relationship of these funded services with FaHCSIA can become a causative or influential factor in the way in which the funding department responds to the work of CASA and the independent actions of advocates.

The team does not want to be seen as the Pale Rider heralding the Apocalypse, but it does believe that CASA can ill-afford to continue to rely on a single source of funding from a funder that funds other services, and ignore the probability that its independence will be compromised—sooner or later. That the program currently has a sound relationship with the funding department should not be treated as a get-out-of-jail abrogation of responsibility for taking action. We believe, therefore, that the task of securing additional sources of funding should glow intensely on the program’s radar of to-do issues, and not be allowed to become a sub-radar afterthought.

**Level assigned to ratings**

R1211: CA program separation from direct service (-) 1 2 3 4 (+)
R1212: Independent CA office location 1 2 3 4
R122: Independence of funding sources 1 2 3 4

**Recommendations**

Maintain consciousness of the rationales for the program to be administratively and physically separate from direct service provision, and ensure the inculcation of these rationales in any new board or staff members.

Instigate or revive, without delay, measures to identify and secure non-government sources of funding, even if initial gains are relatively modest.

**Principle Three: Clarity of Staff Function**

**CAPE rating** R131: Focus of staff role definition
R132: Staff independence from other advocacy forms
R133: Ties to the Citizen Advocacy movement

**Assessment of the evaluation team**

*Focus of staff role definition:* the Citizen Advocacy office staff do not act as advocates; nor do they take over from, or share the advocacy role with, advocates in pre-existing matches. Notionally, there is a clear differentiation between the role of staff and the role of advocates. The staff understand and can express that distinction, which is also unambiguously explained in the program’s written materials (for example, in the advocate orientation manual).
In practice, however, the team would argue that the nature and level of involvement of the staff in some matches represents subtle examples of “mission creep” in the sense that they are inadvertently and (almost) imperceptibly stretching and even overstepping the boundaries of their role. In a few of the matches that team members met, there was a cloud of confusion about the role of CA staff. The response of some protégés in particular, presumably based on their contact with the staff, indicated expectation of involvement that transcended the typical staff/match connection that is commensurate with CA practice.

Staff independence from other advocacy forms: the CA office staff are exclusively involved in the provision of Citizen Advocacy. They do not engage in other forms of advocacy; for instance, paid advocacy for an individual or a class/group of people.

Ties to the Citizen Advocacy movement: CASA can boast an impressive record of active involvement in the larger CA movement. For example, in the past, the program has initiated or sponsored learning opportunities at the national level. Typically, board and staff members avail themselves of any training opportunities, regardless of whether such events are CASA-initiated or not. The team would like to acknowledge the important contribution that the former program manager, Patrick Ruthven, has made in fostering this culture of learning.

Level assigned to ratings

R131: Focus of staff role definition  (-) 1 2 3 4 5 (+)
R132: Staff independence from other advocacy forms  1 2 3 4 5
R133: Ties to the Citizen Advocacy movement  1 2 3 4

Recommendations

Review and recalibrate the involvement of CA office staff in matches, so that they do not inadvertently become quasi-advocates or at least intrusive participants in the relationships.

Maintain ties to the Citizen Advocacy movement, and seek out opportunities and occasions for learning and cross-pollination of good CA practice.

Principle Four: Balanced Orientation to Protégé Needs

CAPE rating R1411: Protégé age
R1412: Protégé capacity for relationship reciprocity
R1413: Protégé need for spokesmanship to defend human and legal rights
R1414: Protégé need for long-term relationship
R1421: Diversity of current advocacy roles
R1422: Balanced of current and planned advocacy relationships
R1423: Availability of crisis advocates
R1424: Involvement of youth advocates
R143: Avoiding social overprotection

Assessment of the evaluation team

Protégé age: according to the program’s statistics, the major gaps in the protégé age-range brackets are 0-2; 3-5; and 6-12. In the 0-2 and 3-5 age brackets, there are no protégés who are currently matched, or are waiting to be matched; nor are there plans to match children
within these age brackets. Obviously, the implication is that children with particular needs—including needs related to their age—who require advocacy are being overlooked, just as potential advocates who identify with children are not being afforded the opportunity to become involved.

**Protégé capacity for relationship reciprocity:** the team estimates that about 18 per cent of the total number of matches supported by the program involve protégés who are defined as being non-reciprocal. Furthermore, the current protégé recruitment plan includes the goal of recruiting two people who are non-responsive. The number of currently-matched protégés who are non-reciprocal, and plans to recruit more people with that emotional disposition, indicates that the program is not ignoring this important protégé characteristic in its matching practice.

**Protégé need for spokesmanship to defend human and legal rights:** there are a substantial number of relationships (over 50 per cent of total matches, it is estimated) that involve some element of spokesmanship. Additionally, there are plans to recruit protégés who have spokesmanship needs.

It is clear that the importance of spokesmanship is embedded in the modus operandi of the program. For instance, the advocate orientation material—and presumably the orientation itself—emphasises spokesmanship. However, the team would also point out that the presence of some level of spokesmanship does not necessarily signify that it is commensurate with that which is needed. Indeed, we encountered some matches in which the protégé’s need for spokesmanship was addressed with insufficient intensity relative to the gravity of the issue, or not addressed at all. We suspect that in such instances, the lack of necessary spokesmanship, or the insufficient vigour of the response, may be largely attributable to imprecise identification of protégé needs by the Citizen Advocacy office in the protégé recruitment phase.

**Protégé need for long-term relationships:** based on the data given to the team, and our own observations, it is likely that about 75 per cent of the current matches will be long-term. This is a significant achievement for the program.

However, without intending to downplay the program’s capacity for facilitating long-term relationships, the team would also like to refer to the issue of discontinuation of matches. According to program documentation, there were 7 discontinuations in 2010-2011 (as well as 5 completions). Seven discontinuations in one year is quite a high number, and is seemingly higher than previous years—although it is difficult to make comparisons, given that program data from year-to-year does not always clearly differentiate between “discontinuations” and “completions.” At any rate, our purpose in raising this issue is not to suggest that discontinuations are altogether avoidable—some discontinuations are inevitable—but to underline the importance of minimising their occurrence, by arranging suitable matches from the outset.

**Diversity of current advocacy roles & Balanced of current and planned advocacy relationships:** the program does not have any matches in which the role of the advocate is formal; that is, a legally-recognised role, such as guardian or adoptive parent. Of course, most Citizen Advocacy relationships are desirably informal, but in some matches, given the needs of the protégé, it will be necessary for the advocate to assume a formal role.
Because the program has not recruited any advocates whose role is formal, it means that protégés with needs that are best addressed in a formal relationship are being ignored, or their needs are being addressed—less effectively—by informal means by advocates in current matches.

If the program is to remedy this glaring gap in advocate roles, it needs to be pro-active in the pre-match phase by seeking out protégés whose needs are such that they require address by advocates in formal roles. Correspondingly, advocates who are willing and competent to enter into a formal role should be recruited. Simply discussing with an advocate, who is in a pre-existing informal relationship, the desirability of assuming a formal role will not be sufficient.

In the informal dimension of advocate roles, the team offers the following observations.

(a) There is an over-representation of expressive-only, low-demand roles (about 17).

(b) The majority of advocacy roles are of an instrumental-expressive nature. Yet, in many such roles, the instrumental component of the role is relatively small. In other words, these roles can be characterised as being mostly expressive.

(c) The image implication of (a) and (b) is that CASA may be in danger of being perceived as “merely” a friendship or buddy program.

Availability of crisis advocates: the team understands that the program has 5 stand-by crisis advocates. One crisis advocate was recruited last year, and there are plans to recruit 2 more in the current year.

It appears that the program has been able to utilise its crisis advocates effectively. At the same time, the team suggests that the program elucidates its understanding of what constitutes a crisis, so that it can clearly differentiate it from other scenarios that require an advocacy response—but are not of a crisis nature. Otherwise, the program is apt to interpret all sorts of serious but non-critical or non-urgent situations as being crisis in character. The following definition of a crisis situation can be found in the crisis advocate orientation package: “A significant life-changing event, which has potential long-term damaging impact on the protégé, is considered to be a crisis.” The team concluded that this definition is too opaque and elastic, and therefore casts a wide net of interpretation. Instead, any definition of crisis advocacy should be tightened to refer to situations that are of a critical or grave nature, and which require an immediate or urgent response.

Involvement of youth advocates: at present, the program does not have any youth advocates (that is, those who are 18 years-of-age or younger), nor are there plans to recruit young people as advocates. This situation may be the flipside of the program’s protégé age-span, given that there are no children and very few adolescents who are protégés.

Avoiding social overprotection: considerable attention is paid by the CA office to minimising the possibility that relationships will be overprotective. We understand that the detrimental effects of overprotection of protégés are routinely discussed in advocate orientation, and in subsequent follow-along with advocates, if necessary. Some advocates interviewed by the team also expressed belief in the competence of their protégés, with the concomitant inference that overprotection was not conducive to competency-building.
Level assigned to ratings

R1411: Protégé age  
1 2 3 4 5 (+)
R1412: Protégé capacity for relationship reciprocity  
1 2 3 4
R1413: Protégé need for spokesmanship to defend human and legal rights  
1 2 3 4
R1414: Protégé need for long-term relationship  
1 2 3 4 5
R1421: Diversity of current advocacy roles  
1 2 3 4 5
R1422: Balanced of current and planned advocacy relationships  
1 2 3 4 5
R1423: Availability of crisis advocates  
1 2 3 4
R1424: Involvement of youth advocates  
1 2 3 4 5
R143: Avoiding social overprotection  
1 2 3 4 5

Recommendations

Gather information from other Citizen Advocacy programs about how they initiate and support the kinds of relationships— in terms of protégé characteristics and advocacy roles— which are unrepresented or under-represented in the program.

Initiate promptly, but without rushing, measures to recruit children and adolescents as protégés.

Pay attention to the number of, and reasons for, discontinuations, and strive to minimise their occurrence.

Initiate promptly, but without rushing, measures to recruit protégés whose needs are best addressed by advocates in formal roles, and correspondingly recruit advocates who can assume such roles.

Remedy the over-representation of expressive-only, low-demand advocacy roles, by recruiting advocates who can assume the full range of roles embodied by the instrumental-expressive continuum and levels of demand.

Sharpen and tighten the program’s definition of crisis advocacy to obviate misinterpreting non-crisis situations as those of a crisis nature.

Adopt as a matter of policy, and implement in due course, the recruitment of youth advocates.

Principle Five: Positive Interpretations of Handicapped People

CAPE rating R15: Positive interpretations of handicapped people

Assessment of the evaluation team

Citizen Advocacy South Australia, in many ways, seeks to avoid or minimise the transmission of negative images of people with disabilities; and instead, strives to promote positive images of them. This understanding of the importance of imagery is reflected in a number of aspects of the program’s work, such as discussion of image issues in advocate orientation, and the positive content and tone of the program’s quarterly newsletter and its
Attention to imagery also extends to an honest acknowledgement—if not address—of the implications of certain program-associated negative images, such as the fortress-like bars of the front façade of the office, which has been mentioned in previous CAPE reports.

However, one consideration that has apparently slipped under CASA’s image radar is the extent to which the formalisation and bureaucratisation of the program is impacting on the way in which protégés and other people with disabilities are perceived. The incessant advancement of hyper-formalisation has been discussed at length in part two of this report. The purpose of re-visiting the issue in this section is to further explore its negative image reverberations.

The evaluation team would submit that the contrivance of formalisation, and the messages it is thus emitting, is “service-ising” the program and “client-ising” the protégés. We hasten to repeat the acknowledgement that some formalised practices that confer a service-like image on the program are government-imposed, such as the need for protégés and advocates to sign forms in order to enter into a relationship facilitated by the Citizen Advocacy office. Nevertheless, the team is not convinced that the program is doing all it can to ensure that image issues do not get needlessly sacrificed on the altar of governmental requirements. As an example, we would cite the government-issued “Certificate of Registration” that is framed and displayed in the front of the Citizen Advocacy office. One potential argument for this promotion is that it conveys messages of professionalism and quality about the program. The countervailing argument is that the display of the certificate—and what’s more, in a prominent place in the office—can reinforce the perception that the program is another human service, and thus image the program’s protégés in the negative role of disability service client.

In advancing the case about the impact of such service-like practices, we concede that these practices are subtle, and that none of them, in isolation, are egregiously image-tainting. However, what must be heeded is their convergent and cumulative impact: they represent a number of straws that are in danger of breaking the back of positive imagery of people with disabilities.

Level assigned to rating

R15: Positive interpretations of handicapped people (-) 1 2 3 4 5 (+)

Recommendation

Conduct an image audit of the program, with particular attention to human service-like practices, in order to—as much as possible—avoid or neutralise negative images, and promote positive images, of people with disabilities.

3.2 CA Office Effectiveness

(10 ratings related to the quality of the Citizen Advocacy program)

CAPE rating R21: Vision and creativity of protégé recruitment

R22: Advocate recruitment
R23: Advocate orientation
R24: Advocate-protégé matching
R25: Follow-up and support to relationships
Assessment of the evaluation team

Vision and creativity of protégé recruitment: Citizen Advocacy South Australia recruits protégés with a range of needs and characteristics, from a variety of backgrounds and settings. Some of the protégés are identified by office-initiated, seek-out methods, whilst others are recruited by acceptance of referrals from various sources, including human service agencies.

In part two of this report, attention was drawn to the need to sharpen protégé profiles for easier identification and communication of protégé needs and, derivatively, greater clarity of initial advocate role expectancies. Protégé profiles that are not adequate or accurate can become a roadblock on the path to making suitable matches. In this section, we do not want to labour the point about sharpening protégé profiles. However, some thoughts will be offered on the typical content of a protégé profile, in the hope that they may contain some “tools” to sharpen the profile.

Although variations exist from program-to-program, ideally, the protégé profile contains the following components: factual information about the protégé; existential reflections on the life of the protégé (based on the “wounding” life experiences taught in Social Role Valorisation workshops); the major needs of, or key issues in, the protégé’s life; potential areas of protégé vulnerability that might call for protective action by the advocate; the characteristics of an advocate for the protégé, based on the latter’s specific needs and issues; the initial advocacy role(s) of the advocate; some long-term goals that the advocate can strive to attain for the protégé (a vision of “the good life”).

Some people in Citizen Advocacy, including the writer of this report, also make a distinction between essential characteristics of the advocate (those characteristics that must be present in the advocate, given the specific needs and issues of the protégé) and the desirable characteristics of the advocate (those characteristics of the advocate that are preferable but can be traded off, given the specific needs and issues of the protégé). Contingent on the specific needs and issues of the protégé, an example of an essential advocate characteristic might be competency in providing spokesmanship, whereas an example of a desirable advocate characteristic might be that the advocate is in a particular age bracket or has certain interests.

Hopefully, the above insights may be useful for the program in reviewing the construction of its protégé profiles, in order to add clarity and depth to them.

Advocate recruitment: CASA recruits advocates for protégés on its “working list”—a short list of people for whom advocates are actively and consistently sought—utilising a variety of means. For example, the program uses its networks for individualised recruitment; that is, approaching someone who can act as, or at least recommend, an advocate for a specific protégé.

At the same time, the program also relies on generalised appeals, such as talks to groups and advertising. More recently, there seems to be an increasing reliance on generalised appeals, which is demonstrably indiscriminate in the first instance. Logically, it invites the possibility
of people coming forward who are not suitable to function as advocates, or at least not suitable to assume the advocacy roles that are responsive to the needs of the protégés on the working list. The upshot of not starting with the working list of protégés in recruiting advocates for them is that it will decrease the likelihood of matches being relevant in addressing the most pressing needs of protégés. In addition, over time, this approach will contribute to the creation of imbalances in the overall composition of matches, in terms of protégé characteristics and advocate roles. The imbalance in advocacy roles, discussed previously in this report, can be ascribed to the apparent trend towards more generalised strategies.

Advocate orientation: generally, the orientation provided to advocates covers the necessary content. However, the orientation process, which comprises 4 or 5 sessions, may be too protracted.

In the conveyance of any new information (such as is done in advocate orientation), there will come a point at which an inverse relationship will develop between the level of content that is imparted and the level of comprehension of the recipient of the information. That is, at a certain point, more information will yield diminishing returns in terms of level of understanding because of information overload. CASA’s orientation may have reached that point.

Another argument against extensive orientation is that it can professionalise the role of the advocate and denaturalise the advocacy response, although that outcome is more likely to be due to the content than the duration of the orientation.

The team’s reason for believing that the orientation may be overcooked is more inferential than evidential—no advocate who was interviewed remarked that the sessions were too long or otherwise problematic—since it is based on our understanding of its length. Consequently, we are not suggesting that there is a compelling need to revamp the content of the orientation to offer a pre-digested version; only that there is a need to streamline its delivery. After all, orientation can be impactful and incisive. Conceivably, the orientation might be impactful because it is incisive: less could be more.

The orientation should also be clear in spelling out the needs and issues of the protégé, and initial advocacy role(s) of the advocate in response, as discussed previously. At present, we are not sure that there is consistent clarity of communication of protégé needs and advocacy roles in the orientation. Some advocates interviewed by the team were not clear about—or at least did not recall—what they were asked to do with and for their protégés before matching proceeded.

Advocate-protégé matching: the Citizen Advocacy office staff are systematic in conceptualising and structuring the matching process, to maximise the likelihood that it results in the formation of a suitable match. The planning extends to consideration of where the introduction—the culmination of the matching process—takes place, as well as anticipation of, and possible responses to, any conceivable occurrences that might detract from the positive tone of that first meeting between the protégé and advocate.

At the risk of being repetitive, the team would like to underscore the importance of striving to ensure that the “front-end,” pre-match, key activities are sound; specifically, that the Citizen Advocacy office incisively identifies the major needs of the protégé, and communicates them
to the advocate in a way that is “clear, explicit, and action-structuring” (CAPE, p. 31). These foundational elements are part of the basic grammar of suitable matching, which will hopefully lead to the goal of a suitable match.

We also strongly believe that the program should revive, and consistently apply, the practice of writing match letters to the advocate and (where appropriate) the protégé, shortly after the introduction. The match letter to the advocate provides the Citizen Advocacy office with an important opportunity to reiterate and emphasise certain aspects about the ensuing match that were first discussed in the orientation. It can also serve as a reference point in providing ongoing support to the relationship.

Typically, a match letter to the advocate would recapitulate the following information:

(a) (about the protégé) the major needs of, or key issues facing, the protégé

(b) (about the advocate’s role) the independence of the advocate from other parties, including the Citizen Advocacy office; the initial advocacy role (s); some practical suggestions to commence the relationship/advocacy; some long-term goals that can translate into a better life for the protégé

(c) (about the Citizen Advocacy office’s role) ongoing contact with the advocate to support, but not direct, the relationship; linkage to advocate associates who can provide informed advice; provision of ongoing learning opportunities and other events sponsored by the office.

*Follow-up and support to relationships*: for the most part, the Citizen Advocacy office provides very effective follow-along and support to the program’s matches. Many of the advocates interviewed by the team were profuse in their praise and appreciation of the effort made by office staff in supporting the relationships.

The team commends the office staff for their work in the provision of follow-along and support. Their dedication is not in question; what may be problematic is “support overkill” in relation to some matches. Lest we are misunderstood: support is important, and even crucial, especially for those matches in which the advocate is facing difficult challenges or is simply displaying a declining commitment. For example, Citizen Advocacy experience has demonstrated that, in those scenarios in which the advocate’s commitment is diminishing, support can be decisive in oxygenating the embers of commitment, and thereby re-igniting the flickering relationship flame. However, when the provision of support by CA staff is disproportionate or misplaced, or their level of involvement in the relationship is otherwise unwarranted, there will be negative repercussions for the status of the match.

The need for the CA office staff to assume a less active role in some matches—and the implications for advocate independence and loyalty to protégé—has been mentioned previously in this report. In this section, we do not want to add anything to that discussion. We do, however, wish to draw attention to an element of staff/advocate contact that, in part, relates to (the interpretation of) the principle of advocate independence. Seemingly, the office staff are not always prepared to advise or challenge advocates, during follow-along with them, especially on those occasions when the advocate and the staff hold divergent views about an advocacy goal, or the means to achieve it. There may be a number of reasons for this apparent reluctance by the staff, one of which is a concern that it might adversely affect the relationship that they have with the advocate. Indeed, the team heard about one instance in
which the staff did challenge the advocate, which was not received well by the advocate and was ramifying for the staff/advocate relationship.

Another explanation for the disinclination to question or challenge the action (or inaction) of an advocate is that there may be a misinterpretation, or an inconsistent interpretation, of some dimensions of the advocate independence principle. Simply disagreeing with, or offering an alternative point of view to, or even challenging, the advocate does not constitute undermining of advocate independence. It is not the same as prescribing or controlling the actions of the advocate. If the notion of advocate independence has been instilled in the advocate (in orientation and in subsequent contact with the staff), then that advocate would presumably not feel beholden to the staff, and would therefore pursue those actions that the advocate perceives to be in the interests of the protégé—regardless of any contrary views of the staff.

*Ongoing training*: CASA systematically provides, or facilitates, training events for advocates. The program arranges 3 or 4 advocate information sessions per year, often using guest speakers, including advocate associates.

The program has been creative in planning and implementing this key activity, although the challenge is to attract more advocates to such information sessions, especially those who have traditionally declined to attend the events.

*Advocate associates emphasis*: the program has 18 advocate associates, whose role and sphere of knowledge is made known to advocates, so that advocates can readily seek their advice, if and when necessary. The list of advocate associates suggests that they represent a range of skills and backgrounds that are of relevance to advocates. And, as mentioned above, the program has utilised some advocate associates as guest speakers at advocate information sessions, thereby paving the way for future contact between them and advocates.

**Level assigned to rating**

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<tr>
<th>Rating Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>R21</td>
<td>Vision and creativity of protégé recruitment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 (+)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R22</td>
<td>Advocate recruitment</td>
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<td>Follow-up and support to relationships</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>R26</td>
<td>Ongoing training</td>
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<tr>
<td>R27</td>
<td>Advocate associates emphasis</td>
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**Recommendations**

Sharpen protégé profiles so that they lend themselves to easier identification of protégé needs, and definition of relevant advocate characteristics and roles, which will then inform advocate recruitment, orientation, and matching.

Develop advocate recruitment plans that will encompass a wide range of advocacy roles.

Streamline the process of advocate orientation so that it is more impactful.

Revive, and consistently apply, the practice of writing match letters following the
advocate/protégé introduction.

Review and recalibrate the CA office staff’s contact with, and the nature of support provided to, matches so that it is appropriate and proportionate.

CAPE rating R28 Balance of key CA office activities
   R29 Encourage of advocate involvement with voluntary associations
   R210 Sufficiency of office staff

Assessment of the evaluation team

Balance of key CA office activities & Sufficiency of office staff: there is some imbalance in the way in which the key activities of the CA office are implemented. For example, far too much time is spent immersed in paperwork, at the expense of actualising some plans.

Whilst there are sufficient staff to undertake the necessary work, a reconfiguration of time and task can lead to greater efficiency. For instance, the team recognises that Indra, in his role as a new co-ordinator, needs to work closely and in tandem with Rosey. However, in the interests of greater productivity, and as Indra is able to function more independently, it is advisable that the two staff do not always work together. Both staff, for example, do not need to be present at all of the advocate orientation sessions, or for the entire duration of a given session.

Encouragement of advocate involvement in voluntary associations: the team did not see any evidence of active encouragement by the Citizen Advocacy office of advocate involvement—nor actual participation by advocates—in voluntary associations that provide class advocacy for their protégés and other people with a similar identity.

Level assigned to rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R28 Balance of key CA office activities</td>
<td>(-) 1 2 3 4 (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R29 Encourage of advocate involvement with voluntary associations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R210 Sufficiency of office staff</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendation

Reconfigure the time and task allocation of the office staff so that, in the interests of efficiency, more of the hitherto in-tandem work is undertaken individually.

3.3 Program continuity and stability
(6 ratings related to viability of the Citizen Advocacy program)

CAPE rating R311: Feasible governance and guidance structures
   R312: Composition of governance and guidance bodies
   R313: Level of leadership involvement
Assessment of the evaluation team

*Feasible governance and guidance structures:* the Board of Management of Citizen Advocacy South Australia is very small, comprising just 6 members. This small number necessarily means that each member’s share of the work is relatively greater than would be expected of a member of a larger-size board.

There is a range of sub-committees whose charge is clear, and is indicated by their name (for example, the key office activities sub-committee, and the fundraising and grants sub-committee).

Although there is a process of orientation for board and sub-committee members, the team is not sure how systematic it is, given that not all members are clear about their role, particularly vis-à-vis office staff, or even about some aspects of the nature and purview of Citizen Advocacy.

*Composition of governance and guidance bodies:* given the size of the board, its composition does not offer a wide range of skills, identities and backgrounds. Whilst current members bring many skills that are important to the functioning of the board and the program, there are people with certain identities and strengths—as described in the CAPE manual (page 41)—who are not represented, thus depriving the board of those valuable perspectives.

In particular, the team noted that, currently, there are no protégés on the board of management. We understand that CASA’s revamped constitution casts doubt about the eligibility of protégés to be members of the program, and therefore members of the board. If our information is correct, then we believe that this is inappropriate for a Citizen Advocacy program. Protégés, who are the very heart and raison d’etre of Citizen Advocacy, should be welcomed as valued, valuable, and desired members of the program and potential members of the board.

*Level of leadership involvement:* there is no doubt that the CASA’s board of management and sub-committees are actively involved in the business of the program. At the same time, a better understanding of the extent to which the board should legitimately be more involved in some aspects of program operation, and perhaps less so in other areas of operation—an issue discussed in the previous section of this report (2.2.4)—will be reached through reviewing and revising the definition and parameters of the roles and responsibilities of the board, within the context of a clearly-framed governance policy. We believe that current climate of CASA will be facilitative of this process.

**Level assigned to rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Feasible governance and guidance structures</th>
<th>Composition of governance and guidance bodies</th>
<th>Level of leadership involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R311</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (+)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations**

Recruit more members to the board of management, especially those whose identities and strengths are not represented in the current composition of the board.
Remove any rules in the program’s constitution that might render protégés to be ineligible for program membership; and instead, adopt an explicit policy that would allow and welcome protégés as valued and desired members of the program, and potential members of the board of management.

Review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the board of management, with particular reference to the practical implications of differentiating between governing and managing the program.

Explore governance arrangements that provide clear guidelines for the conduct of organisational business, and which are compatible with the nature of Citizen Advocacy.

CAPE rating R321: Long-term funding potential
R322: Local funding participation
R323: Program legitimisation

Assessment of the evaluation team

Long-term funding potential: Citizen Advocacy South Australia is exclusively reliant on the Federal Government (through FaHCSIA) for the funding of its entire operation. This source of funding cannot be regarded as stable, even though it is notionally renewable. For some time, the tectonic plates have been shifting under the ground of the advocacy landscape, with the Federal Government favouring other forms of funded advocacy ahead of orthodox Citizen Advocacy. It does not take penetrating prescience to see that a seismic upheaval is likely to occur—at some point in time, probably sooner than later— which will jeopardise the viability of funded programs that aspire to do authentic Citizen Advocacy. That upheaval may come in the form of the imposition of further funding requirements that render it impossible for a program to provide Citizen Advocacy, or a withdrawal of funding regardless. In any event, there is simply no reason to habitually trust in Caesar to be providential.

Therefore, the team believes that the hour hand of the clock is well within the 11th hour for CASA to (re-)commence the process of identifying and securing other sources of funding. The fundraising and grants sub-committee needs to be reinvigorated to take immediate measures to gain alternative forms of funding that are likely to ultimately be substantive and sustainable. It does not make sense to wait until the financial pulse of the program is fast-fading before taking defibrillating action in the hope of resuscitation.

Local funding participation: CASA does not receive any local funding.

Program legitimisation: CASA is government-mandated to receive funding for its work. The imprimatur of the Federal Government through funding confers legitimacy to the program and the advocacy it facilitates for people with disabilities.

Level assigned to rating

R321: Long-term funding potential (-) 1 2 3 4 5 (+)
R322: Local funding participation 1 2 3 4
R323: Program legitimisation 1 2 3 4 5
Recommendation

Instigate or revive, without delay, measures to identify and secure non-government sources of funding, even if initial gains are relatively modest.
CONCLUSION

“CA is a helping form which is especially demanding of staff. Though the concepts basic to Citizen Advocacy can be simply stated, their implications can be complex and continue to be developed. Moreover, there are forces acting on the typical Citizen Advocacy office which push it toward limiting its scope…or confusing its mission…(CAPE, p.11).

The above quotation from the CAPE manual is a reminder of the challenges that any Citizen Advocacy program faces in endeavouring to maintain the integrity of its identity and the quality of its work. Without vigilance, it can be deceptively easy for a program to slip into acting in ways that are “limiting” or that would otherwise suggest that it is “confusing its mission.” One form of vigilance that can be built into the architecture of a CA program is periodic, external evaluation.

The evaluation team commends Citizen Advocacy South Australia for its culture of undergoing regular, independent evaluation. This preparedness to repeatedly submit itself to scrutiny—regardless of how uneasy the experience might be—is a testament to the program’s belief in the importance of evaluation and, ultimately, Citizen Advocacy itself. This, alone, augurs well for the health of the program.

There is a French expression that begins Plus ca la change, the complete saying of which means: the more things change, the more things remain the same. In the case of Citizen Advocacy South Australia, we hope that the expression has limited application. That is to say: we hope that necessary change does not revert to customary sameness after a period of time. Not that CASA needs to undergo wholesale change; the team discovered that there is so much about the program that is worth celebrating, conserving, and consolidating. At the same time, the ushering of circumstantial changes can be fatefuly conducive to the initiating of some practical, necessary, and beneficial changes. To put it simply, we would encourage the program to strive to attain the goal of preserving much, and changing some.

The team is honoured to have been chosen to participate in this evaluation. Our humble thanks to the board of management, the staff, the protégés and advocates, and all others for their co-operation and courtesy.

Finally, we would like to congratulate Citizen Advocacy South Australia on its considerable achievements thus far in improving the lives of so many people with disabilities, and wish the program well for the future in fulfilling its important mission.
APPENDIX A
CAPE RATING SCORES
CITIZEN ADVOCACY SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Date: Saturday, 10 September – Wednesday, 14 September 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATINGS</th>
<th>RANGE OF LEVELS</th>
<th>LEVEL SCORED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R111 Unpaid roles</td>
<td>(-) 1 2 3 4 (+)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11211 Internal promotion</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11212 External promotion</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1122 Advocate practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program independence</td>
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<td>R1211 CA program separation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>from direct service</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1212 Independent CA office location</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>R122 Independence of funding sources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity of staff function</td>
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<tr>
<td>R131 Focus of staff role definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>R132 Staff independence from other advocacy forms</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>R133 Ties to the citizen advocacy movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balanced orientation to protégé needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protégé characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1411 Protégé age</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1412 Protégé capacity for relationship reciprocity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1413 Protégé need for spokesmanship to defend human and legal rights</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1414 Protégé need for long-term relationships</td>
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<td>Level 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity of advocacy roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1421 Diversity of current advocacy roles</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1422 Balanced of current and planned advocacy relationships</td>
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<td>R1423 Availability of crisis advocates</td>
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<td>R1424 Involvement of youth advocates</td>
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<td>Positive interpretations of handicapped people</td>
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<tr>
<td>R15 Positive interpretations of handicapped people</td>
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# CAPE RATING SCORES

**CITIZEN ADVOCACY SOUTH AUSTRALIA**  
Date: Saturday, 10 September – Wednesday, 14 September 2011

<table>
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<tr>
<th>RATINGS</th>
<th>RANGE OF LEVELS</th>
<th>LEVEL SCORED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CA office effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R21 Vision and creativity of protégé recruitment</td>
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<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22 Advocate recruitment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R23 Advocate orientation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R24 Advocate-protégé matching</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R25 Follow-up and support to relationships</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R26 Ongoing training</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R27 Advocate associates emphasis</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<td>R28 Balance of key CA office activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R29 Encouragement of advocate involvement with voluntary associations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R210 Sufficiency of CA office staff</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community leadership involvement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>R311 Feasible governance and guidance structures</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>R312 Composition of governance and guidance bodies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>R313 Level of leadership involvement</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R322 Local funding participation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R323 Program legitimisation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

PROFILES OF EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

**Tom Doody** (team leader) is the coordinator of North Quabbin Citizen Advocacy in Massachusetts, USA. He has been involved with people with disabilities for over 35 years. Tom has worked in direct service, management, training, and consultation roles, and has been an associate of Dr Wolf Wolfensberger.

**Andrew Barton** is a citizen advocate and governing board member at Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy, in Queensland. As a board member of the program, he has served as vice-president for three years, and treasurer for four years. Andrew has held executive roles in other organisations concerned with the welfare of vulnerable people.

**Jen Rowley** is the Executive Officer of the Gippsland Disability Advocacy organisation (formerly Gippsland Citizen Advocacy), in Victoria. From mid-2004 until the end of 2010, she was a Citizen Advocacy co-ordinator at the organisation. Jen has been a Rotarian with the Rotary Club of Morwell for the past six years, and holds the position of Director of International Service for 2011-2012.

**Andrea Simmons** is the Chief Executive Officer for Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) in Canberra, ACT, a role she has held since July 2010. DANA is the national representative body for 65 disability advocacy agencies from across Australia, including 12 Citizen Advocacy programs. Prior to her position with DANA, Andrea worked for more than five years as the manager of ADACAS, an ACT community-based organisation that provides individual and systemic advocacy for people with disabilities and frail older people.

**Jenny Smith** is a citizen advocate and governing board member at Capricorn Citizen Advocacy, in Rockhampton, Queensland. She has a long association with Citizen Advocacy, and is a founding member of Capricorn Citizen Advocacy. Jenny is employed as the Regional Manager, Central Queensland, of Australian Red Cross.

**Mitchel Peters** (report writer) is the chairperson, and former co-ordinator, of Citizen Advocacy Eastern Suburbs in Perth, Western Australia. He has been involved in Citizen Advocacy for over 20 years. Nationally, Mitchel has participated in the evaluation of a number of Citizen Advocacy programs using the CAPE tool, variously as team member, report writer, and team leader.