



## **ACCESS TO INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY**

### **Background Information**

AMPARO Advocacy works with vulnerable people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background with disability for whom language and /or cultural differences make it difficult to access and understand important information and navigate complex systems of support.

AMPARO Advocacy undertakes independent social advocacy with and on behalf of vulnerable people from a CALD background with disability to defend, protect and promote their rights and interests, and to address issues of social and economic isolation, unfair treatment and discrimination. Advocacy respectfully challenges poor approaches and responses by service systems and recognises the importance of close personal relationships as a safeguard for vulnerable people with disability.

AMPARO Advocacy is highly committed to the ongoing process of developing the cultural competence of the organisation across all levels. This will ensure staff can respond to people's needs in a culturally safe and responsive way and are able to implement best practice approaches to achieve long term positive and sustainable outcomes for individuals.

### **Individual Advocacy Policy**

AMPARO will provide state-wide individual advocacy that upholds the human rights, interests and well-being of people from the CALD backgrounds with disability. This work also aims to build the capacity of individuals to exercise choice and control over their lives. AMPARO accepts referrals from individuals themselves / family members / friends /government and community agencies, including the Queensland Disability Advocacy Hub (QDAH). If resources permit, AMPARO will also seek out isolated and vulnerable people from a CALD background who have a disability.

AMPARO aims to advocate for a diverse mix of people who differ in age, disability, language, culture, ethnicity, living arrangement, relationships, and life situations. Advocacy will be provided on a non-discriminatory basis.

Staff will engage certified interpreters and provide translated information where needed, to ensure effective communication, so individuals and families who are not proficient in English are able to understand their rights and entitlements, communicate their needs and make informed decisions and choices.

AMPARO represents those who are most at risk and least able to represent or defend their own rights and interests, so their fundamental needs are met, and they can actively participate, engage and contribute to family and community life.

In accordance with the DSA 2006 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 AMPARO Advocacy does not discriminate on the grounds of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, cultural background, or religion.

**Situations where people are likely to be vulnerable include when people are:**

- without permanent residency, new to life in Australia
- at risk of eviction, homelessness, or living on the street
- devalued or neglected, with their needs not known or not being addressed
- in facilities such as mental health units, hospitals, nursing homes, hostels and boarding houses, group homes, or in prison
- in physical danger or in abusive situations
- at risk of making poor decisions which leave them open to danger and exploitation
- a threat to self or to others by behaviour that is seen as challenging
- without connections, poorly supported, in harmful or unstable living arrangements

Most people who receive advocacy will require intensive advocacy assistance with more than one serious and complex issue and many months of our involvement. However, AMPARO will also provide advocacy to those who have short term issues, less than 6 months.

**Eligibility Criteria**

To receive individual advocacy the person must meet AMPARO's eligibility criteria, which means they must:

- have a disability
- be from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- be vulnerable with fundamental needs not being met
- aged between 0- 65years of age
- live within the Brisbane / Moreton Bay Area to receive face-to-face advocacy, **OR**
- reside in the State of Queensland to receive phone advocacy or support to connect with their local advocacy agency

**Unable to accept**

Acceptance for advocacy is dependent on AMPARO Advocacy having the capacity to allocate a worker to respond to the individual's needs either face to face or over the phone. In situations where advocacy cannot be provided, the person / their family / referring agency will receive advice and information and if needed, supported to connect with their local advocacy agency or referred to the Queensland Disability Advocacy Hub.

**PROCEDURES - IDENTIFYING NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVOCACY**

**Seeking out individuals for advocacy.**

Workers will seek out people who meet AMPARO Advocacy's eligibility criteria for advocacy and who may not come to our attention because they have no one in their lives who is able to speak out on their behalf.

Workers do this by the following activities, but are not limited by these:

- Advocates may identify people while carrying out their work.
- Based on the priorities set by the management committee in the strategic plan, workers will proactively seek out people who require advocacy. Workers may do this by visiting places where people from CALD backgrounds with disability are likely to remain extremely isolated, such as nursing homes, hostels, institutions, hospitals etc.
- Advocates will develop close working relationships with allies and contacts within the multicultural and disability sector that may be able to assist in identifying highly isolated and vulnerable people.

## PROCEDURES – RESPONDING TO NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVOCACY

### STEP 1 – Receiving Requests for Individual Advocacy via phone / email / website

- **Request over the phone:**
  - The worker will determine the need for an interpreter to assist in communicating with the person and if needed access a telephone interpreting service using SWITC or TIS.
  - The worker will seek permission to complete the referral form, **Request for Individual Advocacy Form**.
  - The worker will explain the eligibility criteria and AMPARO's process for accepting new individuals for advocacy. Where possible all details on the form will be completed.
  - **Declining advocacy:** It may be obvious that the person does not meet AMPARO Advocacy's essential criteria to receive individual advocacy, such as they may not be from a CALD background. **If so, inform the person / referrer that unfortunately we cannot assist them and why. Where possible, offer relevant information / advice / strategies and a referral to another advocacy agency or the Queensland Disability Advocacy Hub (QDAH).**
- **Request via email / internet to [info@amparo.org.au](mailto:info@amparo.org.au)**
  - The administration officer will collate all emails and internet referrals for advocacy and bring to the fortnightly staff meeting.
  - If any are clearly ineligible because they are not from a CALD background, they will be entered into IVO as not meeting criteria and therefore not accepted and referred to the Queensland Disability Advocacy Hub. There is no need for these referrals to come to staff meetings for consideration.

### STEP 2 – Consideration of Requests for Advocacy.

- All requests for advocacy are presented at the fortnightly staff meeting to determine whether they meet criteria for face-to-face advocacy / phone advocacy or whether because of limited capacity or other reasons they will be supported to connect with advocacy agencies outside of Brisbane or referred to the QDAH.
- Further investigation may be necessary to clarify a person's issues/ vulnerability or most appropriate support to meet their needs. An advocate will be allocated to seek additional information and bring this to the next staff meeting.
- If the person/ persons meet criteria for face-to-face or phone advocacy, these referrals will be discussed at the advocates meeting to determine:
  - Person's vulnerability and urgency of advocacy issues
  - Whether they are likely to require a long term (greater than 6mths) or short-term (less than 6 months) advocacy response.

- The diversity of people currently receiving advocacy, including: age, disability, ethnicity, language, and life circumstances to assist with prioritising referrals.
  - Whether there is capacity to accept all or some of the referrals (advocates capacity).
  - Which advocate will be allocated to respond to the person to offer advocacy or assistance to connect with another advocacy agency.
- If AMPARO does not have capacity to offer advocacy immediately the person / referrer will be advised of the likely wait time and based on their advice they will be supported to connect with another advocacy agency or referred to the QDAH.

### **STEP 3 – Accepting request for advocacy**

- Notify the person/ family/ referrer that AMPARO can provide individual advocacy. Determine a meeting time, place and if there is a need for an interpreter.
- **Once accepted for advocacy, the worker will seek to develop a relationship with the person / family and to understand the:**
  - Person's vulnerability, their life experiences and current situation
  - Impact of impairment on the person
  - The language and cultural needs
  - Where the person and their family are at in their settlement process
  - The broader social, legislative and policy context

Advocates utilize best practice approaches to ensure important information is understood, so individuals and families can understand their rights, communicate their needs, and make informed decisions by engaging certified interpreters and make translated information available

### **STEP 4 – Declining advocacy request**

- Administration officer will notify referral source of outcome, including reasons for not being able to offer individual advocacy.
- Where possible the worker will offer relevant information / advice and a warm referral if needed to another advocacy agency or refer to the QDAH through the Disability Advocacy Pathways
  - Phone: 1800 130 582
  - Email: [pathways@gai.org.au](mailto:pathways@gai.org.au)
  - Website: [disabilitypathways.org.au](http://disabilitypathways.org.au)

### **AMPARO ADVOCACY DOES NOT MAINTAIN A WAITING LIST**

Given AMPARO's limited individual advocacy resources it is considered unreasonable to give the expectation to people that eventually they will receive individual advocacy. All attempts will be made to link the person or make referrals to other agencies and provide information or strategies that may assist them or their family.