



# 25th Anniversary

## 1989–2014

**Our Mission:**

**“To stand with and for vulnerable  
people with disability  
through vigorous independent advocacy”**

**We at Independent Advocacy Townsville  
acknowledge the peoples of the Bindal,  
Wulgurukaba, Gudjal, Juru, and Girragun Nation as  
the traditional custodians of the communities that  
we serve.**

**We pay respect to the Elders both past and present,  
and extend this respect to all the peoples who are  
descendants of the traditional custodians.”**

Not everyone is born free  
Free to grab their rights with both hands  
Some need to fight  
Fight for basic freedom  
Fight for the same rights everyone else takes as  
assumed  
There are those impassioned to support us  
They become freedom fighters  
They may look ordinary  
But they are extraordinary  
They never take no for an answer  
They are Advocates

**IAT's advocacy** speaks, acts and writes with minimum conflict of interest by standing with, and for people with disability to promote, protect and defend their welfare, rights and justice by: being on their side and no-one else's, without jeopardy to the most vulnerable being primarily concerned with their fundamental needs: and remaining loyal and accountable to them in a way which is emphatic and vigorous and which requires the bearing of costs by the advocate or advocacy group.

## **We believe all people have the right to:**

- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Be valued as individuals
- Participate in the decisions and choices that affect their lives
- Be involved in and contribute to their community
- Safety and protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Live the life they choose
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## **Key Elements of Advocacy**

- Functioning by speaking out, acting and writing
- Minimal conflict of interest
- Sincerely perceived interests
- Promotion of the persons welfare, well-being and justice
- Vigour of Action
- Costs

# History of Self Advocacy for people with Disability

## How did self – advocacy develop?

Growth of social movements in the 1960's and 1970's to assert the belief that:

Individuals were entitled to equality of opportunity regardless of factors such as race, class, gender, sexual preference or disability.

## Challenging the Medical Model:

- These challenges implied fundamental changes in the way people with disabilities might be perceived and the ways in which services may be provided:
- 'Traditionally people with Disabilities have been isolated, segregated, restrained, feared protected, ignored, labelled, treated as sick and dependent.'
- People with disabilities should be entitled to the same human rights as others.

## The Call for change in Australia:

1981 was the International Year of Disabled Persons in Australia

- *People with Disabilities reiterated that they wished to be treated as people first – people whose abilities matter more than their disabilities.*
- They did not want to be seen as sick or different and did not want all decisions for them to be made by others.

## **What legislative Changes were made?**

The Federal Government made funds available to self- help groups. This triggered the process of consultation and review, designed to initiate legislative changes in the area of service provision to people with disability.

Federal Disability Services Act (1986) introduced and marked a philosophical shift towards the principle of normalisation.

- The Act provided support and opportunities for people with disabilities to enable them to live and participate as valued members of the community.
- Specifically in relation to Advocacy, an objective of The Act was: '*That people with disabilities should have access to advocacy support where necessary to ensure adequate participation in decision-making about the services which they receive.*' This Act also included that funds should be made available for advocacy services.

## **How Self Advocacy developed in Queensland.**

Greater Achievement for Disadvantage People began in Brisbane in 1984.

- A number of people with disability living in a large institution wanted to learn how to advocate for themselves.
- Self-Advocacy Support Services (Speaking Up for You) set up.
- Queensland Parents of People with Disability established In North Queensland.

Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement was drawn up in 1991 between the Commonwealth and the States with the aim of allocating responsibilities between both Federal and State Govts in relation to disability services.

Queensland Government introduced the Queensland Disability Services Act (1992) which reflected the philosophy of the Federal Government.

**Independent Advocacy in the Tropics Incorporated, trading as Independent Advocacy Townsville (IAT) was established:**

**The concept develops for North Queensland. (1987 – 1988)**

In 1987, a Public Meeting was held to determine interest in seeking funding to support a self-advocacy organisation. A Steering Committee, comprised of people with disability was set up and tasked with preparing a submission for funding from the Federal Dept. of Health, Housing and Community Services for funding outlined the Disability Services Act (1986). The submission successfully secured funding in late 1988.

A key priority was that people with disability would own and be responsible for the development of an independent (advocacy) group. It was emphasised that people with disabilities organise themselves to advocate for their rights.

They were to be assisted by staff from the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service and the Disability Program from within the Department of Community Services.

The Townsville Welfare Council acted as an auspice. Other resource people came from Queensland Advocacy incorporated, local welfare services, community organisations and parents of people with disabilities.

IAT was formed in 1989 to provide advocacy support for people with disability in the locality of Townsville, Thuringowa and surrounding rural communities.

The IAT Mission statement and Policies were developed resulted in a comprehensive set of principles which are adhered to today. The primary aim is to provide assistance to individuals to enable them to advocate for themselves.

The non-profit organisation was funded by both Federal and State Governments. This funding enabled the Management Committee to open an office and employ a full-time co-ordinator/advocacy worker and a part-time administrative officer.

The Advocating for Rights Conference in NQ was hosted on 15-17 June 1990. This enabled People with disability Including their parents and friends in NQ to come together, learn about and stick to their rights, and share their experiences with other people with disabilities and the whole community.

**Videos:** 'Law is in your Hands' (NQ Deaf Society) and 'A Big Change' story, part of an Assertiveness Video, produced.

In 1991 IAT actively lobbied against changes proposed to the Disability Services ACT (1986) by the Ray Braithwaite Amendment Bill.

**Video:** 'The Journey: IAT's story' was produced.

IAT was involved in a working party to develop a response to the Queensland Law Reform Commission's report on proposed Assisted and Substituted Decision Making Legislation and its impact for People with Disability in 1992.

IAT was involved in the National Campaign for the Enhancement and Protection of Independent Advocacy and involved in the development of a joint Queensland Advocacy Position Paper for presentation to State and Federal Governments in 1993.

Additional funding was provided to employ a Social Action Worker. This enabled IAT staff to focus on the systematic issues that were impacting upon people with disabilities. This led to the IAT's increase capacity to be involved in State and National advocacy networks thus allowing IAT to develop a more integral and complex understanding of advocacy and the ways in which advocacy can be done. The advocacy services were extended to include those people with disabilities who were most vulnerable within the community and unable to advocate for themselves.

### **The following manuals were produced:**

- “Turning Self-Advocacy into Social Action” –Setting New Directions at IAT.
- “Creating Quality Relationships for Quality Lifestyles” – A response in relations to proposals concerning Individual Lifestyle Plans.

**In 1994**, IAT hosted workshops for members and supporters to foster participation of its' members to develop an Advocacy Plan for Queensland i.e. to learn more about IAT's work, and to contribute to a vision for people with disability locally and in Queensland with future advocacy support.

New Commitments for 1994 were to develop networks with the Aboriginal and Islander community and increase our capacity to provide advocacy support in culturally appropriate ways.

The Disabled Person's International (DPI) World Assembly was held in Sydney in December addressed a number of human rights issues prevalent in Australia and at the international level. These recommendations were included in the strategic action plan of DPI titled “Power to disabled people worldwide - A Society for All”.

**A review of the IAT in 1995 listed the following issues to be addressed:**

- New Mission Statement and objectives aimed at assisting the public's perception of the breadth of IAT's advocacy
- IAT to have clear and focus and limits
- Other area expanded including Individual Advocacy Support and additional workshop with Michael Kendrick
- IAT to take a pro-active role in stating a public position on issues affecting the lives of people with disability.

**A series of Campaigns and Coalitions were also instigated:**

- IAT seeks support from our regional Politicians
- Kids in 2 – A Campaign to ensure the “Enrolments Welcome” signs at local schools means ALL children.
- ‘Inclusive Lives: Together We Are better’ campaigned by Qld parents of People with a Disability (QPPD).
- Community Action and Watch Coalition

**Australian Law reviewed:**

- The proposed Guardianship Legislation was debated.
- The ministerial Australian Transport Council (ATC) agreed to a strategy to introduce accessible public transport across Australia by 2015.
- Review the Disability Services Act (1986) and the way the Commonwealth funds administer and provide services for people with a Disability.

## **IAT's involvement in Social action for 1996 included:**

- Election Campaigning – first IAT lobbying effort around political elections
- Northern Advocacy Groups Talkfest and Northern Advocacy Links – workshopped with groups from Cairns and Mt Isa to extend our voice in the North.
- June's campaign – lobbying for funding to enable 'June' to allow her to remain in her own home and not be placed in residential or institutional care.
- **IAT's Sit-In in the City** - 70 people participated in a 'Sit- In' was held in the local State Government building as a public protest against changes to the Institutional reform process. People with disability spoke out publicly, supported by parents and allies with good media coverage. Lists of demands were faxed to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care (DFYACC), calling on the continuation of the institutional reform process.

**In 1997**, Magnetic Island Ferry Service advised that their staff would no longer be able to assist people in wheelchairs, insisting that if the person needed to be carried on board, that they would have to provide their own helpers.

IAT wrote a submission as part of a coordinated campaign to encourage the United Nations to maintain a strong stance on protecting human rights around the world.

IAT lobbied the local political candidates for the 1998 Federal Election to raise their awareness of and promote important issues for people with disabilities and their families. 'Tropical Treats with IAT.'

**Project 300** was created to support people with psychiatric disability who have been long term patients in psychiatric hospitals to move out of those institutions. Originally the Project was established with the DFYACC, but transferred to the QLD Health Dept. IAT lobbied to have this decision reversed as the focus from the Health Dept was medical treatment, not lifestyle support

**Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) was established in 1999.**

IAT continued to make deputations to various politicians, as well as provide advice on lobby strategies to a number of service workers in order to create meaningful and committed service options to people with disability.

IAT participated with the 'Alliance' to investigate issues arising for people with disability from the Cootharinga Society of North Queensland.

**2000 onwards**

**Key achievement for IAT in 2000/2001:**

IAT provided Advocacy support to enable Cairns to establish an Advocacy service and continued with the Project 300 Advocacy initiative.

**Social advocacy activities in North Queensland including:**

- Assisting the 'Alliance' to investigate issues with the Cootharinga Society
- Housing for people with disability

**In 2001/2002** IAT extended its operations to include Charters Towers and Hughenden especially in relation to people with disabilities who are or were previously institutionalised.

## **IAT's advocacy efforts strived to achieve the following:**

- A less vulnerable environment for people with disabilities
- More people standing up for people with disability
- Improved advocacy strengths on behalf of people with disability
- Establishment of a well-supported advocacy presence in Charters Towers.

## **New Projects and education included:**

- Development of the Boarding House and Hostels project
- IAT focussed on people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- IAT was involved in presentations with Mental Illness Education – Australia.

The primary target groups of IAT extended to include those people with disability who are the most vulnerable,

i.e. Those who have been institutionalised and have or have not returned to the community.

Two new programs introduced in 2002/2003 intended to provide service to the most isolated and vulnerable people living in our local residential services:

- The Community Visitor Program providing regular visitors to accommodation facilities providing service to people with impaired decision making capacity.
- The Resident Support Program providing outside supports to eligible people living in residential services.

**Other key activities included liaising, networking and participating with various Advocacy groups, including attending workshops:**

- Focus group of the Advocacy Development Network,
- Combined Advocacy Groups QLD,
- Multicultural Advocacy development (Amparo),
- Culture & Disability Forum,
- Disability Services QLD Disability Funding Reform.

Boarding Houses and Hostels project commenced as it identified area of priority due to the extreme vulnerability of individuals with disability living in such establishments.

**Advocacy of Rural and Remote Areas expanded to include:**

- New Cairns Advocacy organisation – Rights in Action established.
- Networking with North West Advocacy (Mt Isa).

**Program for 2003 – 2004 continued work from the previous years as well as engaging in:**

- Multicultural Advocacy development – delivered presentations to various Ethnic and Multicultural groups.
- Community Education in Townsville – delivered presentations to Employment Services, Public trustee, TAFE.
- Advocacy in Rural and remote areas – developing networks in Tully, Charters Towers, Ingham and Ayr.

**In 2005/2006 new achievements included:**

- Commissioned an organisational “Prose/ Poem” that reflected IAT values and social advocacy principles
- Organised and hosted the annual Combined Advocacy Group QLD (CAGQ) gathering in Townsville.

## **Advocacy activities included:**

- Maintaining contact with relevant networks and Disability support agencies
- Raising issues with the Office of Fair Trading, Residential Tenancy Authority, Guardianship and Administration Tribunal
- Responding to the Closure Response Protocol
- Maintaining a presence in local residential services and their tenants.

## **Criminal Justice System Project:**

- IAT were invited to present a paper at the “Locking Them Up” Conference conducted by Sisters Inside.
- IAT established links with the Brisbane Magistrates Court’s Special Circumstances List Liaison Officer to attempt to establish a similar system in Townsville.

Charters Towers Rehabilitation Service project monitored the relocation of the last three residents from Mosman Hall ‘Transitional ward’ into the community.

## **IAT’s achievements for 2006/2007 included:**

- refurbished and upgraded the IAT office
- continued commitment and expansion of advocacy support and networks for people with disabilities living in rural and remote areas, expansion to Cardwell and Hughenden
- IAT website: www. <http://independentadvocacy.org.au> built
- Strengthened and increased opportunities to influence the ongoing need for social justice for people with disabilities living in boarding houses and/or involved with the criminal justice system.

- Provided vigorous input both written and face-to-face consultation into the National Disability Advocacy Program review by the Commonwealth Govt.

### **Boarding House and Hostels Project update:**

Action was taken in relation to the following:

- Summary eviction
- External service providers not able to be accessed
- Models of service provision
- Financial administration
- Breaches of residents legislated rights
- Opportunities to access specialised external support services.

Charters Towers Rehabilitation Service Project finalised when the last two remaining residents were finally moved into their own home. This ended the 5 year commitment of IAT to see this to the end.

### **In 2007/2008, IAT identified the following as some of the emergent issues impacting on people with disability in our region:**

- Problematic relationships between the Dept of Child safety and parents with disabilities whose children are subject to safety orders;
- Lack of responsiveness of DSQ to the needs of people with intellectual disability subject to Forensic Orders and institutionalised within the Mental Health System.

### **Boarding Houses and Hostels Project update:**

IAT has focussed on a new issue faced by people with disability living in level 3 boarding houses where a higher degree of support is provided to the residents.

## **Arising new issues for IAT for 2009/2010 included:**

Lack of services availability for people with acquired brain injury (ABI). Many people with ABI are subject to institutionalisation due to the lack of available supports.

A new Community Information Project aimed at providing community members with information about IAT and its role to promote the principles of inclusion and the rights of people with disabilities.

Rural and Remote Extension project - Service extended to include Palm Island.

**In 2010-2011**, IAT re-located its office to its current location in Ross River Rd Mundingburra.

## **In 2012- 2013 the priority focus on the following projects included:**

- Young people in Nursing homes, and
- Mental Illness and legal Support Accessibility in North Queensland.

Achievements included building networks within the Forensic Mental Health sector and key State Government stakeholders.

**In 2013-2014** – IAT Manager, Kylie-maree Beller presented a Paper in Sydney about the absolute critical importance of independent advocacy and access to independent information as we work towards the NDIS.

In November 2014 IAT facilitated Sydney based Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), in delivering an Advocacy Strategies Workshop.

This is an independent, non-profit law and policy organisation that works for a fair, just and democratic society, empowering citizens, consumers and communities by taking strategic action on public interest issues. Sydney based Training Organisation, bringing their workshop to Townsville to up skill current advocates and offer training to interested stakeholders in Advocacy Strategies.

### **IAT Self Advocacy Workshops:**

- We commenced our Self Advocacy Workshops; a series of sessions about how to successfully advocate for yourself and your loved ones. Attendees learned the skills that are required to ensure rights are upheld and how to act, speak and write when they are not. As a result of the success of this, we have been given a grant to conduct self-advocacy training in rural and remote areas.

### **IAT conducted educational presentations to such organisations as:**

Rotary,  
The Soroptimist Society  
James Cook University,  
High Schools,  
Office of the Adult Guardian,  
Disability Services  
Medical Practitioners

Where participants were introduced to the notion of independent advocacy and why it is required.

### **Successes:**

Due to IAT's ongoing advocacy and lobbying, Queensland Health agreed to continue to fund the independent advocacy we provided to patients at Townsville Hospital.

The experience of an inpatient admission, whether voluntary or under a section of the Mental Health Act can be confusing and disempowering. Exercising their right to be informed and involved in their own care and treatment is difficult when a person is distressed or when their views may be discounted as part of their 'illness'.

In hospital, an advocate will help get information about legal rights, medication or discharge plans. Advocates can be helpful in preparing for Mental Health Review Tribunals and other meetings, and can often attend meetings, support on day-to-day issues in hospital and an advocate will support in making their concerns known to the staff in a way which is non-abusive thereby relieving burden on staff.

Having an advocate involved assists in reducing recidivism rates to Acute Mental Health facilities. People with mental health disability are more likely to express concerns about their health to someone who is independent.

### **Changes:**

At the 18 December 2013 meeting of the Standing Council on Disability Reform ministers from all jurisdictions endorsed the revised National Standards for Disability Services.

These new standards are seen as a transitional reform enabling nationally consistent quality standards to apply for the disability services sector. They have a greater focus on person centred approaches and promote choice and control by people with disability. These are considered critical under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The new standards have been through exhaustive stages of consultation, validation and user testing, culminating in a set of six standards that are able to be applied across a broad range of circumstances.

**They are:**

- Rights
- Participation and Inclusion
- Individual Outcomes
- Feedback and Complaints
- Service Access
- Service Management

**Independent Advocacy Townsville has also adopted a set of Standards of Service:**

Enable people with disability to know what to expect from IAT.

**1. If you raise an issue of concern or make a complaint about a service you are receiving from another agency, we will:**

- Respond promptly to the issue by investigating your options thoroughly.
- Present you with all strategies and options.
- Work with you to raise the issue or ask your permission to speak or act on your behalf.
- Work with you within an agreed timeframe.

## **2. If you contact us for information, we will:**

- Answer your call promptly during normal office hours.
- Return your call if a more detailed answer is required.
- Provide you with accurate and helpful information.
- Refer you, if necessary, to other appropriate agencies.

## **3. When presenting information/education sessions, we will:**

- Be professional in our presentation.
- Provide you with well researched, updated and relevant information.
- Allow time for audience participation and questions.

## **4. When writing and reviewing IAT policy, we will:**

- Consult with IAT Board members and IAT staff, in the first instance.
- Review on a regular basis (bi-annually or when necessary).
- Inform and consult with Clients through the following avenues:
- Client representation on IAT Committee of Management

**5. If you wish to make a complaint or raise a concern about our service, we will:**

- Inform you of our internal complaints process.
- Advise you of the external processes available to you, i.e. The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; the National Disability Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS) and the Department of Social Services.

**6. As a Client you can help us to help you by:**

- Informing IAT advocates if there are any other people involved in the handling of your complaint.
- Treating IAT staff with courtesy.
- Meeting any obligations of the stated service relationship.
- Giving us feedback on our services

**The IAT Advocacy Framework was also been created:**

To develop a consistent framework for advocacy that covers individual and system wide advocacy, common definitions and desired outcomes and data issues’.

People with disability often face barriers and attitudes that impede their ability to participate in society resulting in poorer life outcomes. Disability advocacy provides people with disability the opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their lives to ensure their rights are promoted and protected.

The implementation of the IAT Advocacy Framework will be guided by the National Disability Advocacy Framework and in turn by the principles and priorities of Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Services legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Strategy.

The target group of the framework are people with disability. The framework is underpinned by a person centred approach whereby policies and programs are designed to respond to individual needs and aspirations. Consideration of the role of families and carers will be taken into account. However, the needs and aspirations of the person with a disability are paramount.

The Framework recognises and acknowledges that people with disability can experience additional disadvantage including, but not limited to gender, age, education, sexuality, geographic location, ethnicity and cultural background. Recognition of the diversity of experiences and the need to improve outcomes for individuals with a disability experiencing multiple disadvantages underpins the Framework.

## **Systemic Advocacy**

“Social action that proactively and assertively seeks to influence positive change to law, policies and procedures that affect the lives of people with disability”

### IAT Systemic Projects are:

- Informed and identified by individual advocacy and
- Informed by the values of our organisation

Currently our Advocates are working on the following issues:

1. Will People with disability have access to National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding at the age of 65?
2. Abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination in Institutional settings in Townsville

## **Our Future**

### **N D I S Update**

*The following information has been retrieved from Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services - Queensland*  
**NDIS update.**

Queensland welcomes the National Disability Insurance Agency

#### **NDIA presence in Queensland**

In July 2014, the Queensland Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Under the agreement, the NDIA is establishing offices in Townsville and Brisbane from July 2014. Five NDIA officers will work in close collaboration with staff from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on a range of NDIS readiness activities.

The MoU enables the department to work more closely with the NDIA and means we will have the opportunity to inform the design and development of the scheme in Queensland.

#### **The objectives of the MoU are to:**

- get the Queensland community as NDIS-ready as possible for the commencement and roll out of the NDIS from 1 July 2016

- make the Queensland disability system as consistent as possible with the NDIS, including adopting NDIS-like policies and processes wherever possible
- facilitate a smooth and effective transition in Queensland as part of the NDIS roll-out from 2016.

The NDIA will continue to build their presence in Queensland as we move closer to the commencement of the NDIS from July 2016.

As we transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme there is a real fear advocacy services will become harder to access. This, at a time when their services will be needed most.

It's both an exciting and uncertain time. The system is undergoing perhaps the biggest change it has ever experienced and in the middle of it all we are making some pretty important life choices.

One of the biggest sources of uncertainty remains what will happen to disability advocacy services in this mix. While there is a huge focus on services that provide choice and control, when asked the big questions about life your first instinct isn't likely to be, "advocacy fees, thanks! Assistance with understanding my rights and ensuring they are protected!"

At COAG, Australia's disability ministers recently agreed that some support related to individual advocacy would be funded by the NDIS on a "user-pays" basis.

We will be eligible for an NDIS funding package to cover our personal care supports but is it right that we are asked to choose between a daily shower and money for advocacy, "just in case" something goes wrong?

The need for advocacy will become more acute as people with disability experience increased choice and control under the NDIS and the best way to do this is for state and commonwealth governments to fund these services outside the NDIS.

Advocacy organisations need to be funded outside of the NDIS because people with disability who are ineligible for individual support packages under the NDIS will also require advocacy services. There are about 4,230,000 people with disability in Australia and it is estimated only 400,000 will receive individual packages under the NDIS.

It is unfair to cut the remaining people off from advocacy services. Without individual funding their need for advocacy may be greater.

Advocacy is a crucial component of making society an accessible place for people with disability to lead meaningful lives, but it only works if it is accessible to people who need it, when they need it.

We need to see both state and commonwealth governments provide much needed certainty in this brave new world.

## **Testimonials:**

1. *Thank you for the invitation to attend the 25th anniversary celebrations. Unfortunately, I will be in Brisbane on that day and I must give my apologies.*

*May I say that I have had close professional working links with IAT since it was established – over almost the same number of years, when I was working at the Townsville Community Legal Service as the Coordinator.*

*I have watched IAT establish itself as a strong and effective advocacy organisation over all of these years and I know it has had many highlights and achievements over that time.*

*I send my appreciation and gratitude to all staff and management committee members – past and present – for their commitment and work on behalf of those who have benefitted from the services provided.*

**Congratulations!**

**Anne Lewis | Director  
North Queensland Women's Legal Service**

- 2. IAT evolved out of a vision of people with disability having a strong voice and funded support for that voice to be heard in North Queensland. The Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986 made it possible for advocacy organisations to be established across Australia. IAT was the brainchild of Tony Breadsell and other committed individuals in the disability sector in Townsville, such as Ellen Mepham.*

*The original focus was on supporting people to be self advocates where possible. The management committee had a majority of people with disability. Many of the clients of the Cootharinga Society of NQ became involved, raising awareness of their fight to be able to live independently in the community.*

*IAT had a central role in supporting the establishment and evolvement of other groups such as Outright Independence in Cairns, and the Mt Isa and Mackay advocacy groups. IAT was a key player in the state-wide advocacy groups teleconferences on issues and joint strategies. Training was a key commitment to ensure staff and management committee members were supported in advancing the principles of social advocacy and its impacts for people with disability.*

*IAT also worked closely within the disability and legal sectors in Townsville forming positive and lasting supportive working relationships, while remaining independent.*

*I am deeply honoured to have been appointed as the first co-ordinator of IAT and to have worked with and advocated for so many inspiring people. I believe IAT holds a strong place in the North Queensland region to continue to give voice to the issues that continue to be fought by people with disability.*

**Julie Ford,  
First Co-Ordinator of IAT**

**Acknowledgements:**

Independent Advocacy Townsville would like to express our gratitude for the passion and commitment of all past and current members, management Committee and staff.

Without the dedication and refusal to give up, the tenacity and uncompromising belief in the rights of people with disability, we would not have been able to achieve what we have to date.

