

The Advocacy Standards Project

Newsletter

JULY 2023

The Advocacy Standards Project aims to develop an Australian standard that has formal recognition and standing, that is auditable and capable of being deployed across the funded Advocacy sector in Australia as the key benchmark of quality and the driver of continuous improvement and development to ensure consistent and quality services to people we serve.

Message from the Project Leader

Half-way through 2023 we have made substantial progress on drafting the text of the Standard which applies to Advocacy for older people and people with disability in Australia. This newsletter will update you on how the project is progressing, and what to expect throughout the year.

In the coming months there will be an opportunity for anyone to comment on the draft Standards and we look forward to hearing your constructive input. Details of this will be coming shortly.

Progress to date

Since the February Newsletter most of the focus has been on drafting the Standard. The Technical Committee asked for Working Groups to be formed, made of up people working as Advocates in both the aged care and disability Advocacy sectors, and people who use Advocacy in both sectors. Three Working Groups were established to assist the Technical Writer appointed to us by Standards Australia with the expert content required to make sure quality in Advocacy was understood and captured in the text. The three Working Groups each met on three occasions to discuss and draft criteria which cover the following aspects of the Standard:

- 1) Delivering Advocacy in a human rights framework
- 2) Service design, access and delivery
- 3) Governance, quality and systemic advocacy

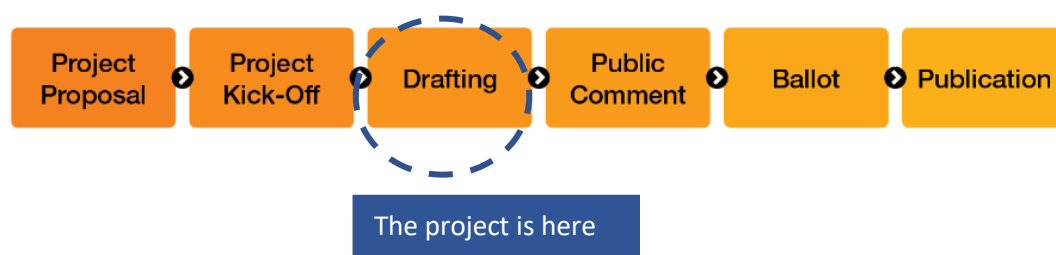
These groups have also met as a single group in the past week to consider the changes that are still recommended for the Standard as a whole and continue to provide important input to the wording.

The Technical Committee has met on four occasions now and has been making decisions about the wording of the Standard and suggesting work to be done by the Working Groups. This process is nearing an end, with one or two more Technical Meetings to take place later in July to consider the Standard in its current form, and to determine whether or not it is ready to be released for public consultation, a critical part of the development process.

The Technical Committee overseeing the development of the Advocacy

What Next?

The graphic below indicates where we are on the journey to develop the Standard. We are nearing the end of our drafting phase, which will be followed by a short period of editing by Standards Australia, after which the draft Standard will be released publicly for the first time for comment. This period last 9 weeks, and a formal consultation process is established by Standards Australia which allows anybody to provide their feedback on the Standard via a web page on the Standards Australia website. We will provide details of this in a separate bulletin closer to the time, with details of how people can contribute to that consultation.



In addition to the Standards Australia consultation, OPAN and DANA are engaging Capacity Services to conduct their own consultations with the Advocacy sector, providers of Advocacy and those who use it, as well as other stakeholders. Two interactive online meetings will be held to discuss the Standard, which will be released with accompanying documents to explain what it is intended to achieve and how it is meant to be applied to ensure quality in the delivery of Advocacy. In addition to the online meetings six face-to-face sessions will be held, three for providers and three for users of Advocacy, in Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane. Dates and venues for these meetings, together with details of the online sessions, will be released once the finalisation date for the drafting is clear. At this point we are aiming for late August/early September, but will keep you informed of the exact dates. Registration for all sessions will be via the OPAN and DANA websites, and when these pages are available we will let you know.

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Background Information

Project Intent

In the wake of the [report](#) from the Aged Care Royal Commission, the role of Advocacy for older people became more prominent, and this was reinforced during the COVID pandemic and its devastating impact on older people. The [Disability Royal Commission](#) has also highlighted the violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of people with disability in their communities and in some specialist service settings, focusing the need for strong independent Advocacy. The two peak bodies representing Advocacy, the Older Persons Advocacy Network ([OPAN](#)) and the Disability Advocacy Network Australia ([DANA](#)) agreed to work together to create a new Australian Standard specific to Advocacy for Aged Care and Disability, which can be used to strengthen and continuously improve Advocacy, and enable agencies to demonstrate to government departments that they are achieving outcomes for the funding they receive.

Once the Standard is approved then there is a separate process that turns the Standard into a practical and applicable process that can be implemented at service outlets. This will be undertaken in conjunction with JAZ-ANZ.

Project Coordination and Development

Michael Bleasdale of Capacity Services Ltd is leading the project, alongside his colleague Murray Coates, and their contact details are available at the end of this newsletter. Michael has worked, and continues to work, in the Disability Advocacy sector for many years, and has experience of Advocacy for Older People as the former CEO of ADACAS in the ACT. He has also held roles on the Boards of the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) and the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA). Murray has worked in the disability sector for over 30 years, and in other community service roles in four states and territories, as well as holding a number of roles with a national focus.

Michael's role in this project is to coordinate all elements of it, and to guide the development of the Standard itself through the Technical Committee and Working Groups which have been established by Standards Australia and have been responsible for providing the expert content for the Standard.

The Standard is named MB-031, and has members from OPAN, DANA, disability and older persons' peak bodies, research bodies, and, of course, Advocacy agencies who will be the users of the Standard when complete. It also has officials from the Departments of Social Services and Health and Aged Care. At this point in the project it has been important to understand whether or not the Standard in its current form will meet the requirements that government agencies might have to use the Standard to certify the quality of those Advocacy services they provide funding to.