

**TOWN & COUNTRY COMMUNITY OPTIONS INC.,**

**FAMILY**

**INFORMATION**

**BOOKLET**

**Updated  
June 2006**

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## **HISTORY OF THE AGENCY**

On June 13<sup>th</sup> 1994, a public meeting was held to discuss a community access service for people with disabilities. The organisation decided upon would be for the Maryborough area. After the need for this service was established, a Management Committee was formed with a panel of concerned parents, people with disabilities and other interested parties.

## **THE ORGANISATION**

The organisation is a community access service that promotes the acquisition of a diverse range of valued 'non-work' social roles in community settings.

## **FUNDING**

The organisation was originally funded through the Department of Families, Youth & Community Care. It is currently funded through Disability Services Queensland.

## **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The organisation functions under the direction of the Board of Management.

## **SERVICE MANAGER**

The Service Manager is directed by and is accountable to the Board of Management, and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation.

## **EMPLOYEES**

Lifestyle support Workers must meet the organisations criteria, and will possess a knowledge of Social Role Valorisation. The Lifestyle Support Worker will assist people on a regular basis, thus ensuring continuity and quality of service delivery.

The organisation works under the guidelines of the Queensland Disability Services Act, 1992 and is required to meet the National Disability Services Standards, 1994

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Management Committee of Town and Country Community Options Inc., consists of parents of people with disabilities, people with disabilities and other interested parties.

Individuals and their families are encouraged to discuss any relevant issues with the Service Manager or the Board of Management.

## VISION STATEMENT/AIMS

Town & Country Community Options Inc., will assist and support people to access a diverse range of valued social roles within community settings, whilst remaining accountable to the people they are supporting, their families and advocates.

It will maximise physical and social inclusion through the participation of people with a disability in the life of the community, and promote positive image to the local community, planned in the context of social neighbourhood networking.

Town & Country Community Options Inc., will provide assistance by employing Lifestyle Support Workers who are best able to meet the requirements of the individuals that they will be supporting and who are able to recognise the abilities of the person with the disability.

Town & Country Community Options Inc., will ensure that the individuals and their advocates play an integral part in the implementation, planning, policy development, setting priorities, and the evaluation of their own services. It will also ensure that opportunities are available for people with disabilities to participate in decision-making and choice about their own future.

Supports provided will reflect an holistic approach, offering opportunities for the maintenance and the development of competencies of each individual, whilst recognising each personal value system, and the individual's specialised requirements in the following areas'.

- Social
- Educational
- Vocational
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Relationships
- Spiritual

The services provided must also support and develop the person's value system, as well as their self help and communication skills as much as is appropriate for each individual.

Town & Country Community Options Inc., will ensure that the Policy, Philosophies, Aims and Objectives of the organisation will be integrated into the administration and day-to-day running of the service, using the available resources as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Be flexible and responsive to changing needs, including changing support levels, while having a high regard for other service objectives and maintaining a quality service delivery.

Promote positive family involvement, respect family members' rights to be involved in the decision making process, and encourage participation in management practices.

Develop mechanisms to enable formal parent/advocate participation in evaluating quality controls.

Employ only people whose philosophies are consistent with those of the organisation.

Ensure effective communication between employees about the requirements of the individual based on appropriate information, whilst ensuring the respect of an individual's rights of privacy and confidentiality.

Support employees to perform their duties by sound management practise, effective communication, feedback, adequate supervision and the access to grievance mechanisms.

Promote and assist the use of generic services that are available to all members of the community to ensure that people with a disability can obtain the required services.

## MISSION STATEMENT

- 1) To establish an individualised, responsive and flexible organisation for people with a disability.
- 2) To encourage the community inclusion of people with a disability.
- 3) To enhance the competency and image of people with a disability within the community and to promote growth and the development of community attitudes to encourage respect to all people.
- 4) To facilitate access to community resources for people with a disability, and to ensure that the 'Least Restrictive Alternative' is used as a matter of course
- 5) To provide a quality service for people with a disability that ensures minimum restriction to individuals' rights and opportunities.
- 6) To promote inclusion in the local community, and facilitate positive and rewarding experiences for the person with a disability.
- 7) To follow the guidelines of the Queensland Disability Services Act (1992) and the Queensland Disability Services Standards - National Standards.
- 8) To provide each person with a disability an Individual Lifestyle Plan/Profile. A plan that will be designed by the person, their family, their advocates and staff members and that will enable the service to provide the person with an holistic, quality lifestyle.
- 9) Provide individuals and their families with an accessible and transparent complaints process.
- 10) To provide a service that is non-discriminatory with respect to age, gender, race, culture, religion and disability.
- 11) To be committed to the implementation and maintenance of the Queensland Disability Service Standards.



## PHILOSOPHY:

The Philosophy of the organisation is based upon the following concepts that will guide decision-making in the development of services and their delivery.

### A: **SOCIAL ROLE VALORISATION**

The committee members of the organisation know, and act on the belief that **every person** in our society has the right to a quality lifestyle.

We believe that the best way to ensure recognition of these rights for people with disabilities, is to operate upon the principles of '**Social Role Valorisation**'. '**SRV**' (as this theory is called for short) works towards creating or maintaining **socially valued roles for all people**.

### B: **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ALTERNATIVE**

Meeting individual need and facilitating individual growth and development in ways that least restrict personal freedom.

### C: **DIGNITY OF RISK**

Every person has the opportunity to be exposed to normal risk situations, in all aspects of his/her level of skills.

### D: **HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE INDIVIDUAL**

Recognising the person as a Social, Emotional, Sexual, Spiritual person.

### E: **QUALITY SERVICE**

Excellence, and continuation of improvement

### F: **RESPECT FOR THE INHERENT DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

### G: **COMMUNITY INCLUSION**

Involving people with a disability in all aspects of mainstream community life.

### H: **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Recognise the rights and responsibilities of the individual, family members, the household, the community and employees.

### I: **FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO FAMILY REQUIREMENTS**

## INDIVIDUALS RIGHTS

Town & Country Community Options Inc., and its' employees agree that people with disabilities have the same basic rights as other members of Australian society, and recognise the following user rights – the right:

- ☼ to be treated as an individual,
- ☼ to realise his or her capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.
- ☼ to receive services without discrimination to age, gender, race, culture, religion or disability.
- ☼ to participate in decision making about their own lives.
- ☼ to the least restrictive alternative in the service they receive.
- ☼ to an organisation that is flexible to allow for change as needs change.
- ☼ to be involved in all decisions about his/her life, including the right to say 'no' to a service offered.
- ☼ to information about the organisation including referral procedures, eligibility and complaints mechanisms.
- ☼ to complain about the service received without recriminations.
- ☼ to privacy and confidentiality of all personal information.
- ☼ to have access to all personal information recorded.
- ☼ to social and physical integration into the community, to use ordinary community facilities.
- ☼ to be protected from physical, emotional, vocal or sexual abuse.
- ☼ to be asked permission before any photographs are taken, or any material published; and that such information or material is of a positive nature.
- ☼ to invite his/her friends to visit.
- ☼ to have information about other services that are available.
- ☼ to a personal advocate to act or speak on his/her behalf.
- ☼ to be involved in the development of their Personal Futures Plan.
- ☼ to have individual goals reviewed regularly and outcomes documented.
- ☼ to have copies of all written policies concerning the organisation.

- ☀ the right to receive a service that has, as its' ideals, the principle of Social Role Valorisation.
- ☀ the right to receive support from the organisation that incorporates both internal, and external evaluations.

**Individuals: (person with a disability/their family)**

There are currently 45 individuals receiving assistance to access their community through this organisation. We also support a number of user pay individuals on a regular basis.

**Board of Management**

President	Robyn Farraway
Vice President	Jean Lohse
Secretary	Lex Gorrie
Treasurer	Simon Forrest
Individual Advocate	Jean Lohse
Staff Advocate	Donna Midgley
Committee Member	Donna Midgley
	Merle Stackman

**Operational Staff**

Manager	Pat Burfield
SLSW	Kerry Gillard
Administration Assistants	Anne Cash
	Anne Gorrie
Trainee	Kae Bellert

**Support Workers**

**Staff members (47)**

# **ORGANISATIONAL CHART**

***INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY GROUP***

***BOARD OF MANAGEMENT***  
***TOWN AND COUNTRY COMMUNITY OPTIONS INC.,***

***SERVICE MANAGER***

***STAFF MEMBERS/SUPPORT WORKERS***

***SENIOR LIFESTYLE SUPPORT WORKER***

***ADMINISTRATION***

**PARENTS DECLARATION  
OF INDEPENDENCE &  
BILL OF RIGHTS**

**The inalienable rights of parents of children with disabilities – by Sol Gordon.**

The following rights allow parents to determine if they are doing right by themselves; whether they are doing the right thing. The first four rights constitute the basic Declaration of independence. Once these are realised, or at least are in process, the next ten rights (The Bill of Rights) become possible.

**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

The first right is to mourn, to feel sorry for yourself, to agonise of the question 'why me?'. The right to work through all of the could-ofs' or should-ofs' in your life part of this. Have death wishes. Blame God, or question why He has forsaken you. And then as soon as possible for you, come to the conclusion that you will never know the answer to most of your important questions. Now you have to do the best that you can, and get on with your life.

It's not that simple. Not everything worthwhile is complicated. But almost everything worthwhile is difficult to accomplish.

You have the right to feel that you are doing the best that you can, that you are coping with an enormously difficult situation the best way you know. But it is essential not to gauge anyone else on the basis of your expectations for yourself. Your spouse may be doing the best he or she may by simply returning to everyday routine, work for example. A sibling might not be anywhere near meeting your expectations or requirements.

What constitutes your timing may not be anybody else's. By being a model and inspiration, you can accomplish a great deal. By being a nag, by wallowing in self pity, by being preoccupied with tragedy, you will undermine what you need to accomplish.

You have the right to begin selfishly organising your life to your own satisfaction. More than ever you need hobbies, distractions, and excitements. At no time previously did you ever need the opportunity for leisure and pleasure as much. Do the things you enjoy; however much this is contrived; however much you feel that you can't afford the time or money; however much you feel your neighbours will misinterpret what you do.

The final absolute essential thing, is to have a sense of humour. Nobody can survive a tragic situation without eventually developing a sense of humour. Family life can become grim with everyone walking on tiptoes and laughter can be misunderstood at these times.

**I shall never forget the story of a fifteen year old boy, with a learning disability, being taught to take out the garbage. His response was, 'I can't take out the garbage – I'm brain injured.' His mother's reply was, 'If you don't want to be brain injured twice, you'd better take out the garbage.' This happened in a lively, active home where people were more than just survivors. They live a good life.**

**If you don't have a sense of humour, fake it. When you hear other people laugh, laugh with them. You will be surprised in a year's time, you will have your own sense of humour.**

#### **BILL OF RIGHTS:**

**1) The right not to be blamed – How devastating when a teacher or professional of anybody suggests that the reason your child is in trouble is because of your guilt, or your inadequacy or your psychological problems. Of course, in some cases there is an element, however small, of the truth in some of the accusations, but rarely is the criticism helpful. The right also applies to not being intimidated by professionals simply because of their presumed superior knowledge or status.**

**2) The Right to understand what's going on – No parent should leave a conference with school personnel, mental health professional or physicians without a complete understanding of what they are talking about. If they use abbreviations for tests, or give a medical diagnosis in jargon you do not understand, it is always appropriate to ask for an explanation in language that you understand thoroughly.**

**3) The Right not to be exploited – It is hard enough having to cope with the daily tasks and troubles of parenting. Imagine having to pay exorbitant rates for help from insensitive staff and not getting your money's worth for the precious money you have to spend.**

**4) The Right to accept help without apology – If any friend or relative asks you if there is anything they can do for you, always say yes. You may lose 90 percent of your friends and relatives that way, but those who stick by you, you can count on. There is usually something somebody can do for you – babysitting an hour or two, take your child to the movies or ball game, run an errand for you. You must, however, expect in advance that most people's offers of help are not genuine. If it turns out otherwise for you, I certainly do not mind being wrong about this prediction.**

**5) The Right to make decisions – parents are invariably under pressure to accept the decisions of experts. It is your child and your responsibility. It is up to you to make the decisions, even if they disagree with any combinations of experts.**

**6) The Right to be angry – Most of the progress that has been made in the field of the care and management of children with disabilities has resulted from the work of angry parents. Rarely can you count on professionals to take the initiative for progressive innovations in your child's best interest. It does occur in the realm of political advocacy, but rarely when it comes to the daily management of severe disabilities.**

7) **The Right to a normal family life – having a child with a disability should not exclude anyone from family celebrations, parties or the whole range of what constitutes the joys and travails of family life. This is not to suggest that everybody and anybody will feel comfortable in the presence of, or interacting with your child. The failure to appreciate the high level of discomfort that the average person has to relating to people with disabilities certainly inhibits their acceptance in society. Talk about the discomfort. It is not a plea for pity; it is simply an introduction to eventual integration.**

8) **The Right to live part of your life that does not include your child – There is a powerful need for parents to be on their own, to get away from everything, to go away on vacations without their children. No healthy, mature family functions well in a posture of togetherness all the time. Sisters and brothers may resent the need to play with and relate to the child with a disability to the exclusion of their own special needs.**

9) **The Right to fake it from time to time – From time to time it is perfectly alright to present the image that everything is O.K., especially with people you do not care much about. Just as it is appropriate to express anger at times, it is also OK to squelch it. Recent evidence suggests that unexpressed anger is not necessarily harmful and is sometimes even beneficial. Just because we are angry does not mean that the other person is ready and able to receive our anger.**

**William James suggests that ‘Wisdom is learning what to overlook’. And sometimes faking it creates the best possible conditions for improvement of a really grim situation.**

10) **The Right to expect miracles – It is right not to give up, not to operate on the assumption that our current scope of knowledge is a verdict of doom. It is incredible how many people have survived ‘death sentences’. Look at the progress that is being made today with the help of computers.**

## **MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU**

**You get no points for being a parent of a child with a disability. We need to acknowledge that for you, everything in life is harder, more costly in every sense. Comfort or peace of mind will not come from comparing yourself with anyone else, even if you objectively know that many other people’s troubles are worse than yours.**

**The biggest problems develop when the whole family becomes disorganised around the existence, care and management of a disabled child (to say nothing of more than one disabled child). However, families can organise and support each other, especially in the situation where (1) once unified families are threatened with breakdown, and (2) families are hanging together because of determination and commitment, but lack the previous sparkle, spontaneity and joy for family life.**

**Not all of my suggestions will work for you, but some might, and these will add to the excitement of your strength. The hardest thing to recover from is anger. Yet anger, diluted with forgiveness has a special alchemy – becomes determination, if not courage, to do the best you can. Accepting your anger with a sense of**

**forgiveness helps to reorganise your family, put your own life into orbit and give priority to yourself, no matter how much you need to attend to your spouse and children. More than anything else, do not isolate yourself no matter how miserable you still feel.**

**The very best test of whether you are working in the right direction is the amount of energy you have. Discounting extreme situations, energy is mainly a psychological phenomenon. How often have you experienced a period of exhaustion that instantly turns to boundless energy upon meeting someone you care about, or upon receiving an unexpected surprise visit or phone call, or upon learning something new.**

**Haven't you also noticed that mature love experiences are energising while immature ones' are exhausting? If you are working towards maximising autonomy for your child; if you believe that your past is not your potential; if you have some faith or optimism; you are determine to consider the needs of the whole family; you do have to accomplish very much before you notice that you have a great deal of energy.**

**Remembering that unhappiness itself is alienating, not only because people shun those who are unhappy, but also because people who are miserable often resent other people's happiness. The vitality of healthy children reassures parents about their marriage as well as themselves. When there is something wrong with the child, the whole enterprise of marriage and family is threatened. Knowing what the odds against you are, makes it even more compelling for you to do the best you can, and to get on with your life.**

## **ADDITIONAL RIGHTS**

**The following are additional rights, one privilege and one inevitable consequence. These rights are for you to dwell upon, to discuss with your spouse and to bring up in family meetings. Then you can create more of your own.**

- 1) Not to devote your entire life to the cause, but freedom to devote as much as you want, or to get away from it for a while.**
- 2) Freedom to take your time in deciding what to do. The right to shop around for competent professional help. The right not to accept advice or even comfort, especially from people who say things like 'you think you have trouble?'**
- 3) The right to intervene on behalf of your child, to arrange parties and rendezvous with friends.**
- 4) The right to consider institutionalisation, even if it goes against the trend.**
- 5) The right to feel that it is not God's will, nor is it punishment.**
- 6) The right to feel that it is God's will (but you still have it figured out, What is His message).**

- 7) The right to send your child to a camp for summer, even if the child does not want to go. It is amazing how 95% of them end up with a really good experience.
- 8) The right to good and bad moods. The right not to be perfect ( to have hostile thoughts). It is alright to feel bad and mourn from time to time.
- 9) The right to become a student, such as to learn sign language, or to become a specialist in a field, even if your motive is initially to help your own child.
- 10) The right to have all the privileges of your religion.
- 11) The right to expect your child to learn to live well with the family.
- 12) The right to joke, fool around and be silly.
- 13) The right to get some use out of all the sorrow, whether it is writing a book, poetry or understanding the needs of other people in a more sensitive and compassionate way.
- 14) The right to pay attention to your own health. Become a health nut.
- 15) The right to be a family that sticks together, no matter what.
- 16) The privilege to use your own experiences to be helpful to other parents.
- 17) The source of pride – to be proud of your accomplishments.

*This brings us to the inevitable consequence.*

- 18) Enabling your child to also be proud.

Sol Gordon received his doctorate in psychology from the University of London (England). He was a professor of child and family studies and director of the Institute for Family Research and Education at Syracuse University from 1970 – 1985 and is now Professor Emeritus. Dr Gordon lives in Belmont, Calif; and devote his time to group lectures and seminars on various topics. He is the author of 15 books, including *When Living hurts*, (Dell paperback, 1988)

**SERVICE**

**OVERVIEW**

## SERVICE TYPE

Town & Country Community Options Inc., is an organisation that provides Community Access for people with disabilities within Wide Bay.

The organisation is funded by Disability Services Queensland.

Funding packages received are as follows:

- a) Adult Lifestyle Packages
- b) Institutional Reform Packages
- c) General - Block Funding
- d) Post School Services (Incorporating POST & Options Plus)
- e) Service Development
- f) Viability
- g) YACS
- h) Emergency & Critical

The organisation is a community access service that promotes the acquisition of a diverse range of valued 'non-work' social roles in community settings.

**Activities and training provided can be as varied as required as listed below:**

a) Banking	b) Shopping
c) Literacy & Numeracy	d) Cooking
e) Horse riding	f) TAFE
g) Craft	h) Fishing
i) All types of hobbies	j) Computers
k) Mowing/car washing	l) Gym
m) Church and related activities	n) Bike riding
o) Trampolining	p) Library
q) Choral Society	r) Theatres
s) Galleries	t) Museums
u) Woodworking	v) Beaches/picnics
w) Aromatherapy	x) Music therapy
y) Lunching out/visiting	z) Water sports
aa) Walking	bb) Cinema
cc) Gardening	dd) Volunteer work

## HOW TO OBTAIN SERVICES

Any person with a disability between the ages of 0 – 65 may apply for services. Each person must be registered with Disability Services Queensland, and be in receipt of a Disability Pension, or a Child Support Pension.

As the service is run on individualised funding all applicants would have to be in receipt of the abovementioned packages. However, the organisation is more than happy to assist in

the completion of the application for funding forms and have copies of the registration forms and application forms available at the office.

## **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

All individuals are requested to bring the necessary funds to enable them to access whatever activity they have decided upon for that day, so it may be that they will require admission costs for the cinema etc.,

The organisation has three vehicles, one is a wheelchair accessible bus and two cars. These vehicles are constantly being used and bookings must be made the week prior to the required time. Individuals are charged at a nominal rate for normal travel to assist with fuel costs, and are requested to refill the vehicle after a long trip (Brisbane etc.,).

## **EMPLOYEES USING THEIR OWN VEHICLE**

It is the staff's responsibility to get to and from work, which is either your home or the individuals home. Staff are not paid a mileage allowance and must claim this on their annual tax return. We do not insist staff use their own vehicle at work, however as previously mentioned, the organisation is limited to three vehicles, all of which are used on a daily basis so it is inevitable that staff will be required to use their own vehicle at some stage.

If you request support workers transport your son or daughter, it is necessary that you are aware that the staff are paying for this themselves, and that you are happy with the roadworthiness of their vehicle.

The Queensland Disability Services Standards (QDSS) are the minimum accepted standards for services in Queensland. Services are evaluated against these Standards to demonstrate areas of further development or excellence in quality. (Full copies of these Standards are available on request). The following ten procedures are a general description of our broad range of services and how we respond to individual need while being accountable to the funding body

**QDSS: 1 SERVICE ACCESS**

***Each individual seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.***

**Entry Policy –**

- 1) Person must be in receipt of or be eligible for a Disability Support Pension/or Level two of the Child Disability Allowance.
- 2) Person must be registered with Disability Services Queensland. Town and Country Community Options Inc., Service Manager is happy to assist people to apply for the following packages.

Person must be funded through Disability Services Queensland in one of the following areas:

- |    |                           |        |
|----|---------------------------|--------|
| a) | Adult Lifestyle Support   | (ALSP) |
| b) | Family Support            | (FSP)  |
| c) | Other Grant payments      | (MISC) |
| d) | Attendant Care            | (ATCC) |
| e) | Post school Services      | (PSS)  |
| g) | General Funding           | (DGEN) |
| h) | Institutional Reform      | (INST) |
| i) | Young Adults exiting Care | (YACS) |
| k) | Emergency & Critical      | (EMER) |

The person and their family are then able to nominate their preferred service provider.

- 1) The Service Manager will meet the person and their family and/or advocate to discuss what services are required and what staff members may be suitable.
- 2) Services are flexible to meet the requirements of the individual and their family.
- 3) The service is accessible for people between the ages of 0 months to 65 years.

- 4) The service adopts and applies a non-discriminatory eligibility criteria and entry rules with respect to age, gender, race, culture, religion and disability, consistent with funding obligations, applicable legislation and purpose of the service.
- 5) Lifestyle Support Plans or Profiles will be developed for each person, and these will be reviewed on a regular basis to enable for change, increased growth and a quality of service delivery.

### **Exiting the Service:**

Individuals are provided with services on an ongoing basis. If they choose not to use the service, or leave the geographical area, written advice to the effect is requested.

If an individual or their family is dissatisfied with the service and wishes to transfer their funds to another service, the Manager can seek approval for this from Disability Services Queensland. Individuals and their families may also wish to raise the issue with Disability Services Queensland.

If there has been any dissatisfaction with the service it would be appreciated if individuals, their families or advocates could discuss the issues with the Service Manager to see if there is any way to improve the services provided to the person, before consulting with DSQ.

Following departure of the service, the individual will not be disadvantaged, or receive any retribution if they wish to re-enter the service at a later date.

Please be advised that if support for the individual is funded through our block funding, this will not be transferable. Block funding is funding provided to the organisation, not individuals.

### **Referrals to Organisations that would provide generic services to individuals**

The individual will be requested for their consent exchange of personal information and details to other organisations during the referral process.

**QDSS: 2 INDIVIDUAL NEED**

***Each person with a disability receives a service, which is designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his/her individual needs and personal goals.***

**Procedure:**

Each individual is encouraged to have a Personal Profile reflecting their goals; these profiles are also referred to as Lifestyle Support Agreements/Profiles. These plans may or may not be generated by Town and Country Community Options Inc., but be bought with them from another organisation. However, the individual and their family are encouraged to continue to take an active part in the development and review of their own plans. The Lifestyle Plans/Profiles are to reflect the agreement of all stakeholders and document the efforts made to achieve agreed outcomes.

Each individual will be provided with a copy of his or her Lifestyle Plan/Profile in an appropriate format.

Each Lifestyle Plan/Profile will be reviewed within an agreed timeframe.

The individual's health and wellbeing is treated with the greatest consideration when the development of their individual Lifestyle Plan/Profile is being developed.

### **QDSS: 3 DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE**

***Each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to services he/she receives***

- ▶ The agency has policies and procedures on mechanisms, which maximise individual participation in decision making at the individual and service level.
- ▶ The organisation has developed, in consultation with individuals and their families, written policies and procedures which maximises individual participation in decision making at the individual and service level.
- ▶ Individuals are provided with information and support to access an advocate, or independent person of their choice to assist them in their decision-making and choice, if necessary.
- ▶ Support staff work within their 'duty of care' towards the individual that they are supporting, and the least restrictive alternative is utilised whenever practicable.
- ▶ The organisation will provide the necessary formats to facilitate the individual's decision making abilities of their required activities. These formats may be in the form of photographs; flashcards; alternative sign language, or any other format required.
- ▶ Each individual and their family will be provided with a copy of the organisations Family information Booklet at the onset of joining the organisation, together with copies of the Town & Country Community Options brochure. The individual and their family will also receive a copy of the monthly newsletter.
- ▶ The individuals choice of advocate or independent support person will be kept on record in the individuals files, and they are encouraged to assist the individual in their decisions in regards to Individual Plans/Profiles and activities they wish to access.
- ▶ An information checklist is required to be completed before the commencement of services, this check list provide the necessary information regarding the individual and any required risk management policy.

**QDSS: 4 PRIVACY, DIGNITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

***Each individual's rights to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in all aspects of his or her life are recognised and respected.***

- ▶ Information regarding the individual/family is not discussed other than to inform others of essential items e.g., medication, diet, personal requirements. Staff will always be respectful when disclosing information that involves a individual and their family.
- ▶ Individuals and their families may have access to their own personal profiles and their family support goals upon request.
- ▶ Any private and confidential information that concerns the individual and their family is securely stored and maintained.
- ▶ Information regarding individuals accessing the service will not be divulged to any other agency without written consent of the individual and his/her family.
- ▶ Permission must be obtained from the individual and/or their family before any photographs/videos are taken.
- ▶ Individual files will only be accessed on a 'need to know' basis.
- ▶ personal care will be performed by support staff of the same gender as the individual where possible, or as requested.
- ▶ Bedrooms/bathrooms are the individual's private space and courtesy and dignity will be shown by staff entering these rooms.
- ▶ Support staff will follow the Employee code of Conduct at all times, and adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement they are requested to complete on an annual basis.

**QDSS: 5 PARTICIPATION & INTEGRATION**

***Each person with a disability is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in community life.***

- ▶ The agency has written policies and procedures are framed in a way that provides opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in community.
- ▶ Services are provided in a way that facilitates the integration and participation of each person with a disability in the community, at times and in ways similar to other members of the community.
- ▶ Each individual is provided with information about generic community facilities and services and how to access them.
- ▶ The agency provides each person with a disability the opportunity to form and maintain a variety of ties, connections, networks and involvements in their community.
- ▶ To enable the organisation to introduce the individual to other generic services in the community, it will be necessary for Release of Information forms to be completed that permit the exchange of information relevant to the generic service. (You will find a copy of these forms at the rear of this booklet).

**QDSS: 6 VALUED STATUS**

***Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in their community.***

- ▶ The agency's written policies and procedures reflect the valued status of individuals.
- ▶ The agency promotes the abilities, contribution and competence of people with a disability.
- ▶ Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills, capacities and lifestyles that are valued in the community.
- ▶ Support staff will follow the Employee code of Conduct at all times, and be committed to promoting the ability of the individual in their fulfilment of valued roles in the community.
- ▶ The individuals Lifestyle Plan/Profile will be reviewed on a regular basis to include strategies for the development and maintenance of the individual skills.
- ▶ The individual's plan/profile would be available for other generic services to ensure the continued development and maintenance of the person's specific skills and competencies.

**QDSS: 7 COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES**

***Each individual is free to raise and have resolved, any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the agency or service.***

- ▶ The organisation has developed written policies and procedures on the resolution of individual's complaints and disputes.
- ▶ Individuals and their families are aware that they can speak with staff members and members of management if they have any valid complaints or concerns regarding the person's service provision.
- ▶ The organisation's policies and procedures on individual complaints and disputes are made available to individuals in appropriate formats.
- ▶ Each individual and their family are encouraged and assisted to raise any concerns he or she has about the agency or service, without fear of retribution.
- ▶ The organisations Complaints Process is tailored to meet with individual/family requirements, the procedure is a clear and transparent process.
- ▶ The individual and their family are offered support to access an independent advocate to assist them through the complaint process if required.
- ▶ The organisation keeps a register of complaints to enable continued growth and service improvement strategies.

## **QDSS: 8 SERVICE MANAGEMENT**

***Each agency adopts sound management practices that maximise outcomes for individuals.***

- ▶ The agency ensures the legal and human rights of people with a disability are upheld within the service.
- ▶ The agency provides a safe physical environment for its' individuals.
- ▶ Individuals have the opportunity and support to take part in the planning, management and evaluation of the service.
- ▶ The roles and responsibilities of the board, committee of management and staff of the agency are clearly defined, documented and available.
- ▶ Organisation Policies and Procedures reflect the compliance of human resource management and Workplace, Health and Safety legislation.
- ▶ The organisations information management system for documents is both in electronic and hard copy format, and meets legislative standards.
- ▶ The organisations Policies and Procedure documents are endorsed by the Board of Management and provide guidelines for all staff to provide a consistent and effect quality service delivery.
- ▶ Independent service user reviews are carried out; the reviews are evaluated by an independent person to ensure that all stakeholders receive the service they require.
- ▶ The financial management of the organisation reflect effective, accurate and transparent financial control. The organisation has a financial audit at the end of each financial year, the results of this audit is available at the Annual General meeting, which is held in September.
- ▶ Current Policies and procedure documents are consolidated into a master file and document control register.

**QDSS: 9 PROTECTION OF LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND FREEDOM FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

***The organisation is committed to upholding the legal and human rights of each person with a disability, and to taking action to prevent and/or respond to allegations of abuse and neglect.***

- ▶ The organisation has current policies and practices protecting the rights of service users that are consistent with Commonwealth and State legislation and relevant human rights instruments.
- ▶ The organisation provides support for service users to exercise their legal and human rights.
- ▶ The organisation has effective policies and practices in place that demonstrate prevention of any form of sexual, financial, physical, mental and verbal abuse.
- ▶ The agency has procedures in place for critical incident reporting, that respond in a timely and effective manner to allegations of abuse and neglect.
- ▶ The organisation has a documented improvement plan detailing strategies for protecting service users from abuse and neglect.
- ▶ The organisation policy and procedures guide staff action in the prevention and/or addressing any form of abuse, assault or neglect.
- ▶ Policies for the reporting of critical Incidents are in place and document specified timelines for action and/or reporting.

## **QDSS: 10 STAFF RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT & DEVELOPMENT**

***The recruitment, selection and development of paid and unpaid staff ensures they have the relevant values, skills, knowledge and competencies to support service delivery to service users.***

- ▶ The organisation carries out transparent, accountable and robust employment recruitment, and selection policies and procedures for all applicants that meet with the selection criteria requirements.
- ▶ The recruitment of staff and the selection process includes the organisation commitment to equal employment opportunities, and the appointment of staff based on merit.
- ▶ The organisation ensures that there are documented position description for all vacancies. The position descriptions are current and are consistent with the roles and responsibilities of all paid staff.
- ▶ The organisation provides each new staff member with appropriate and relevant induction to ensure that service delivery meets the required standards.
- ▶ The organisation has a system of staff appraisal that is based to the QDSS. This system identifies the values, skills, knowledge and competencies of each staff person, and provides ongoing development through additional training opportunities.
- ▶ Before commencement of their position, staff are required to participate in a police check and to apply for a 'Working with Children card'. All staff members are required to obtain the 'Blue card' to ensure they are prepared if the need arises that they are requested to support children and young people.

## Grievance/Complaint Mechanism – Individual

### Policy:

Town & Country Community Options will provide services in accordance with the Disability Services Act (1992) and the National Disability Services Standards.

Any person with a disability or a member of their family have the right to pursue any grievance/complaint related to any service he/she receives, or does not receive from Town & Country Community Options Inc., without fear of recrimination.

### Procedure:

Any grievance/complaint about the organisation should be addressed in the following order:

- ◆ Discuss the issue with the appropriate employee.
- ◆ If, after discussion the grievance/complaint is not resolved, discuss the issue with the Manager.
- ◆ If, after discussion with the Manager the grievance/complaint is still not resolved, the person may contact the Individual Advocate on the Board of Management. Or, if preferred an independent advocate will be obtained for the person/family.
- ◆ The Individual Advocate will then consult with the Manager.
- ◆ If the situation is still not resolved, the individual or family member, with the support of the Individual Advocate will bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Management.
- ◆ The Individual Advocate may, if he/she deems it necessary, arrange with the President of the organisation to call a 'Special Meeting' of the Board of Management.
- ◆ Individuals and their families have the right, and will be assisted to put any grievance/complaint in writing to the Board of Management.
- ◆ Any grievance/complaint in relation to the Manager should be referred directly to the Individual Advocate on the Board of Management, or to the independent advocate.
- ◆ Assistance will be provided to enable the person with a disability or their family to access Advocacy Support wherever appropriate, and to assist them to exercise their rights.
- ◆ Individuals or their families have the right to take a grievance/complaint about a funded service to the office of Disability Services Queensland.

Further assistance for the individual and/or their family is available by contacting the following:

1. Disability Services Queensland – Community Resource Officer – Helen Bennetts. Ph 07 41 239 119
2. The organisations Individual Advocate on the Board of Management – Mrs Jean Lohse – Ph: 07 41 212 564
3. Queensland Advocacy Inc., 1300 130 582  
07 3236 1122  
[gai@gai.org.au](mailto:gai@gai.org.au)

**Written June 2006**

**Ratified by Board of Management – \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_**

**President:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Robyn Farraway**

**Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Patricia Burfield**

## **GUIDELINES FOR ADVOCATES**

### **Who can be an advocate?**

Advocacy is the process of standing alongside an individual who is disadvantaged, and speaking on their behalf in a way that represents the best interests of that person. If the service user of our agency has asked you to be their advocate, this means they would like you to act on their behalf. You may be a family member or friend of the person, or a member of an advocacy service. Service users and prospective advocates should be aware that interpreters cannot be used as advocates, as they have a distinct role to play in interpreting communication between two or more parties.

### **Responsibilities as a service user advocate:**

Being an advocate may mean your attendance or involvement could be required during assessments and reviews of the service user's personalised/individual plan, or should the service user want a representative to communicate and/or negotiate with us on his/her behalf regarding access to their personal information; lodging a complaint; or any issues related to our service performance. We ask our service users to complete a 'Notification of Support person/Advocate Form', when they wish to appoint or change their advocate. Service users are free to change their advocates whenever they wish, however, whenever a change occurs another nomination form is to be completed.

### **Definitions:**

Advocate -	An advocate is a person who, with explicit authority, represents another person's interests.
Informal Advocate -	A friend or family member who is nominated by a service user as their personal advocate.
Systems Advocate -	An organisation or professional advocate who can act for a disadvantaged individual or group of individuals in an institutional setting.
Legal Advocate -	A nominated advocate whose role has legal status, for example holding an Enduring Power of Attorney.

### **The role of an advocate explained:**

Advocacy may involve speaking, acting or writing on behalf of an individual (or group) who has limited ability to exercise his/her/their rights. Advocacy is a mechanism to facilitate service user rights, and you may be requested to support the service user in exercising his/her rights, for example the right to:

- privacy and confidentiality
- respect and dignity
- quality services
- information to inform decision making
- choice and control
- resolution of complaints
- non-discrimination, and
- protection of legal and human rights, and freedom from abuse and neglect.

Advocacy differs from mediation and negotiation. Mediation and negotiation processes aim to reach a mutually acceptable outcome between the parties. The role of the advocate is not impartial, as he or she has an obligation to operate entirely from the perspective of the service user in negotiating an outcome. Advocacy is concerned with genuine major needs, and aims to protect the interests and promote the welfare of the service user.

The advocacy perspective is specialised and quite distinct from the service provider perspective. As advocates and advocacy organisations often stand in contradiction to the system in terms of attitudes towards people in need and beliefs regarding how best to serve the, effective advocates strive for independence and minimise conflict of interest. It is therefore inappropriate that interpreters accept the advocacy role, as their interpreting responsibility does not permit the necessary independence required of an advocate. Advocacy may involve a degree of conflict with service providers and other authorities and therefore may be costly in terms of emotional stress and other demands.

### **Checklist for advocates:**

As an advocate of a service user we ask you to be aware of the following and to ensure that:

- ▶ the service user has given written authority for you to act on his/her behalf.
- ▶ you inform us that you are acting as the service user's advocate.
- ▶ you always act in the best interest of the service user.
- ▶ the service user is aware of any issues and developments in relation to services' they receive and which you, as their advocates, may be involved in.
- ▶ the service user is kept informed of any developments in relation to the issue/s where you are representing their interests, and that any relevant decisions will be made by the service user.
- ▶ you encourage the service user to provide feedback to you about the services they are receiving.
- ▶ you advise the service about any changes to service user circumstances and any concerns about changing service user needs.
- ▶ you are prepared to relinquish the role of advocate should the service user wish this.
- ▶ you avoid representing them in circumstances where there may be a conflict of interest, and
- ▶ you do not act as interpreter for the service user while acting in an advocacy role

***Thank you for acting as an advocate for our service user***

## NOMINATION OF SUPPORT PERSON/ADVOCATE FORM

Our service users may have the support person of their choice accompany them through any procedures or negotiations with our service. Parents or legal representatives are accepted as service user support people without the need for completion of this form. This form is to be used when a service user chooses to nominate an informal support person (friend or significant other) or an individual or organisation to advocate on their behalf, or change their nominated support person/advocate. The intention is to ensure clarity between the service and the nominated individual/agency about their role. A support person acts to support the service user in his/her negotiations with our service. This may include providing assistance with communication, and/or advising on service user need's. An advocate speaks on behalf of the service user, to ensure that the person's best interests are represented. A service user may choose to have both an informal support person and an advocate, depending on the circumstances concerned. When completing the form, please strike out the term that does not apply. If both an informal support person and an advocate are being nominated, please complete a form for each one.

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of service user)

nominate \_\_\_\_\_ to act as my support person/advocate,

effective from \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ His/her contact details are \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of service user/legal representative)

Dated \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

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I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of service user)

wish to change my nominated support person/advocate. Effective from \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

I would like my interests to be represented by \_\_\_\_\_

His/her contact details are \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of service user/legal representative)

Dated \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

## Authority for the Release of Relevant Information

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give my consent to Town & Country Community Options Inc., of 3/75 Lennox Street, Maryborough to release any relevant information that may be required to assist in my support, to any other agency, organisation or medical authority on my behalf. The information is to be released, only at the discretion of the Service Manager, and must be sighted by him/her before its' release.

Person's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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If I am unable to sign this authorisation, the document will be completed by my family member, carer or chosen advocate:

Family member, Carer, Advocate name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 200 .

Person's name and address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Information Checklist

I have explained the following information to \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signed by Service Manager \_\_\_\_\_

- Eligibility criteria for entry to the service.
- The procedures for prioritising access
- The person's right to access a support person of their choice to assist them when entering or exiting a service.
- How the service works with the person to develop an individual plan to assist them to achieve their goals
- What support will be provided, how the support will be delivered.
- How frequently the individual plan will be reviewed
- What information can be offered to assist the family to access an advocate/support person of their choice
- Procedure for minimising risks to the person, without limiting their choices.
- Service users right in relation to privacy and confidentiality of personal information.
- How the individuals and their families may access information held about them.
- Procedures regarding the release of personal information to another party.

- Assistance that can be provided for the development and maintenance of the person's skills.
  
- Processes in place for raising complaints or concerns.
  
- The services policies for resolving issues that may be causing the person dissatisfaction with the service
  
- How the person can participate in decision-making processes.
  
- How the person can be assisted to exercise his/her Human rights

The above information has been explained to me.

Signed by service user/support person \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_