



Explorability Inc

Individualised advocacy for people with disability

Annual Report

2017 – 2018

Table of Contents

Explorability's Values and Objectives	3
Chairperson's Report	5
Chief Executive Officer's Report	6
Explorability Board	8
Explorability Staff	8
Individual Advocacy	9
Acknowledgments	16
Contact Information	16

Explorability's Values and Objectives

The values of Explorability Inc. include:

Person Centred – people living with disability, families and carers are central to everything that we do;

Excellence – we will lead the way in the development and improvement of best practice;

Respect – our actions are guided by a high regard for the inherent dignity and worth of each person;

Integrity – we are open, honest, accountable and ethical in all our interactions; and

Collaboration – we develop innovative and effective working relationships.

The objectives of Explorability are:

- (a) to ensure that people with disability:
 - (i) are encouraged to maximise an independent lifestyle so as to contribute to and be included in the mainstream community; and
 - (ii) have choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports,by having access to:
 - (i) the provision of sustainable, appropriate and flexible services and supports that meet the individual needs of people with a disability and their family and carers; and
 - (ii) the individualised services, supports and resources they need to optimise their health and well-being and participation in a welcoming community through, but not limited to, community engagement and participation, daily living, family support, systemic and individual advocacy and service planning and coordination;
- (b) to influence the strategic direction of governments and decision makers through an evidence base including formal research, information, policy development and advocacy;

- (c) to strengthen the capacity of all people living with disability and their families and/or carers in metropolitan, regional and remote communities to have a voice and to exercise choice; and
- (d) to build partnerships in the community, business and government sectors.

Chairperson's Report

The CEO and staff of Explorability have sustained their growing success by accomplishing an increase in successful achievements with supporting individuals with a disability.

Explorability exceeded all of its individual advocacy service delivery contractual requirements and provided services to 259 unique individuals which increased from 207 unique individuals in the prior financial year. This has been despite a significant increase in the administration and assessment from an increased number of individuals seeking advocacy support as well as an increase in the complexity of referrals received due to more individuals presenting with multifaceted disability diagnoses.

As a result of Explorability reaching full capacity of service provision, the CEO, with the support of the Board, planned and effectively implemented a structural staffing change and whilst this was only a more recent variation, the positive impact of the new organisational structure can already be seen. In addition, this change has allowed the CEO to allocate more time and energy into developing the future strategic direction of Explorability.

The future of Explorability in continuing to provide advocacy services as well as other appropriate support to individuals with disabilities has resulted in Explorability embarking upon a pathway to consolidate its Board and we are pleased to now have a range of skills and experience within the Board to take Explorability into the next era.

The last part of the year saw a positive result with the Department of Communities, Disability Services (Disability Services) providing a gratuity of non-recurrent funding with the purpose of increasing the capacity of the Individual Advocacy Program. The positive results from the additional funding will support Explorability to continue building its strong focus on working collaboratively with people with disabilities, families and carers.

I acknowledge the ongoing and tireless effort that Tracy Foulds has put into the role as CEO of Explorability which now sees this growing organisation establishing itself as a leader in individual advocacy services. Additionally, I appreciate the contributions from all the Board members over the past year and I look forward to continuing to be part of Explorability as it moves into the next chapter.

Alicia Mason
Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Toward the end of 2017, the Western Australian State Government announced that WA would join the Commonwealth's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) after a period of trialling both the state and federal models in various regions across the state. While the decision may or may not have reflected the views of individuals, at least there was some certainty about the system which would be used for meeting the needs of people with disability in WA.

The focus for Explorability has, and continues to be, ensuring that people with disability, families and carers have the support they require to meet their advocacy goals and can have their needs met in a rapidly changing environment. In order to achieve this, Explorability has to be adaptable to the changes taking place and adaptable to the changing needs of the individuals seeking advocacy. Much of the strategic focus for the organisation has been ensuring that Explorability continues to be flexible and responsive in its approach to providing advocacy now and into the future.

In 2017 – 2018, Explorability expanded on the three strategic priorities from the previous year to create the following five priorities:

- **My Life, My Voice:** Supporting individuals to be at the centre of the decisions about their lives. The advocacy service focuses on individual and cultural needs, strengths and abilities;
- **Creating Positive Change:** contributing to and creating opportunities for change which promotes and upholds the rights of people with disability, families and carers;
- **Partnerships for Positive Outcomes:** Collaboration and strong relationships with people with disability, families and carers, government agencies, community services organisations, business and the broader community to better support individuals to lead the life they choose;
- **Valuing People:** All members of the Explorability team are valued and supported to meet the vision and purpose of the organisation;
- **Growth and Innovation:** Developing and enhancing awareness of Explorability's services and embracing this period of change as an opportunity for growth and service improvement.

In 2017, Explorability experienced a significant increase in the demand for advocacy and reluctantly initiated a waitlist in October. This increase was partly a result of the changing role of the Local Coordinators, who had previously provided an information and advocacy role, as well as disability sector organisations rationalising their in-kind support under the new funding arrangements. Explorability welcomed the non-recurrent funding from Disability Services to assist with building additional capacity within the advocacy program for 2018 – 2019.

As this report was being prepared, Disability Services advised that the contract for providing Individual Advocacy will be extended until December 2019. It continues to be unclear what the future holds in terms of funding for individual advocacy services under the NDIS, however Explorability will continue to liaise with Disability Services about the important role of advocacy in WA and will remain committed to its vision of ensuring people with disability, families and carers have a voice and are able to achieve positive outcomes.

Explorability participated in consultations for the development of a funding strategy for systemic advocacy in WA. The WA State Government has just recently announced \$1.2 million for systemic advocacy for the next two years. Naturally, the organisation is keen to ensure that the individuals supported by Explorability contribute to and have a voice in creating positive systemic change through this funding initiative.

I would like to thank the Board of Management for their ongoing support and direction in 2017 – 2018. I would like to thank Nick Lonie for his tremendous support as both Chairperson in the previous year and as a Board Member from the very beginnings of Explorability. Your support and advice has been greatly appreciated. I wish you all the best for your future endeavours. I would also like to thank the current Chairperson, Alicia Mason, whose support and advice in the past 12 months has been greatly valued, especially in this period of significant change and uncertainty.

The hard work and commitment of staff over the past year has also been greatly appreciated. The contribution of each staff member is highly valued and central to the organisation's ability to meet the needs of people seeking advocacy support. I look forward to working with you in the coming year to build on the previous achievements to further develop a high quality, responsive and effective advocacy service.

Tracy Foulds
Chief Executive Officer

Explorability Board

The Board of Management for Explorability in 2017 - 2018 included:

Alicia Mason – Chairperson
Geoff Weaver – Deputy Chair
Daniel Rowe – Treasurer
Janet Peacock – Secretary
Sarah Patterson
Nick Lonie
Carly Wharton
Scott Fraser
Anne Matthews

Sarah Patterson, Anne Matthews and Scott Fraser resigned from their positions on the Board during the year. The casual positions were filled by Deane Criddle, Kim Law and Nick Dawe. In the lead up to the Annual General Meeting, Nick Lonie and Carly Wharton indicated that they would be resigning from the Board.

Explorability's current Board of Management and staff would like to thank Sarah, Anne, Scott, Nick and Carly for their contribution to the ongoing development and strategic direction of Explorability. The staff and Board wish them all the best for the future. Special thanks to Nick, in his role as Chairperson in 2016 – 2017, for his significant contribution to ensuring Explorability was well placed for the future.

Explorability Staff

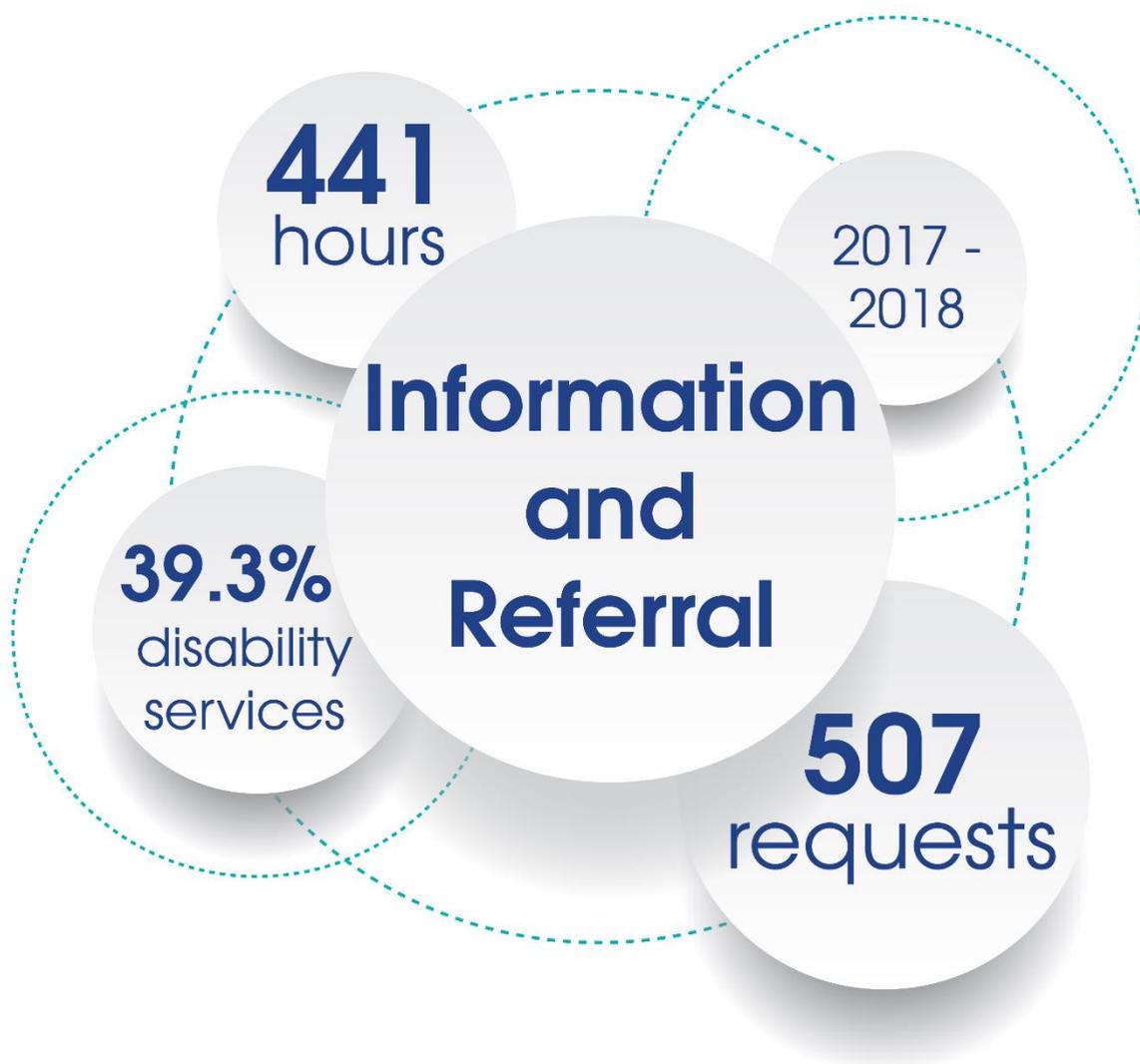
Tracy Foulds – Chief Executive Officer
Vicki Bailey – Senior Advocate
Shelley Jones – Senior Advocate/Individual Advocate
Roslind Witham – Individual Advocate
Kerry Kessner – Individual Advocate
Samir Zarif – Advocacy Officer
Raelene York – Office Manager

Individual Advocacy

Information and Referral

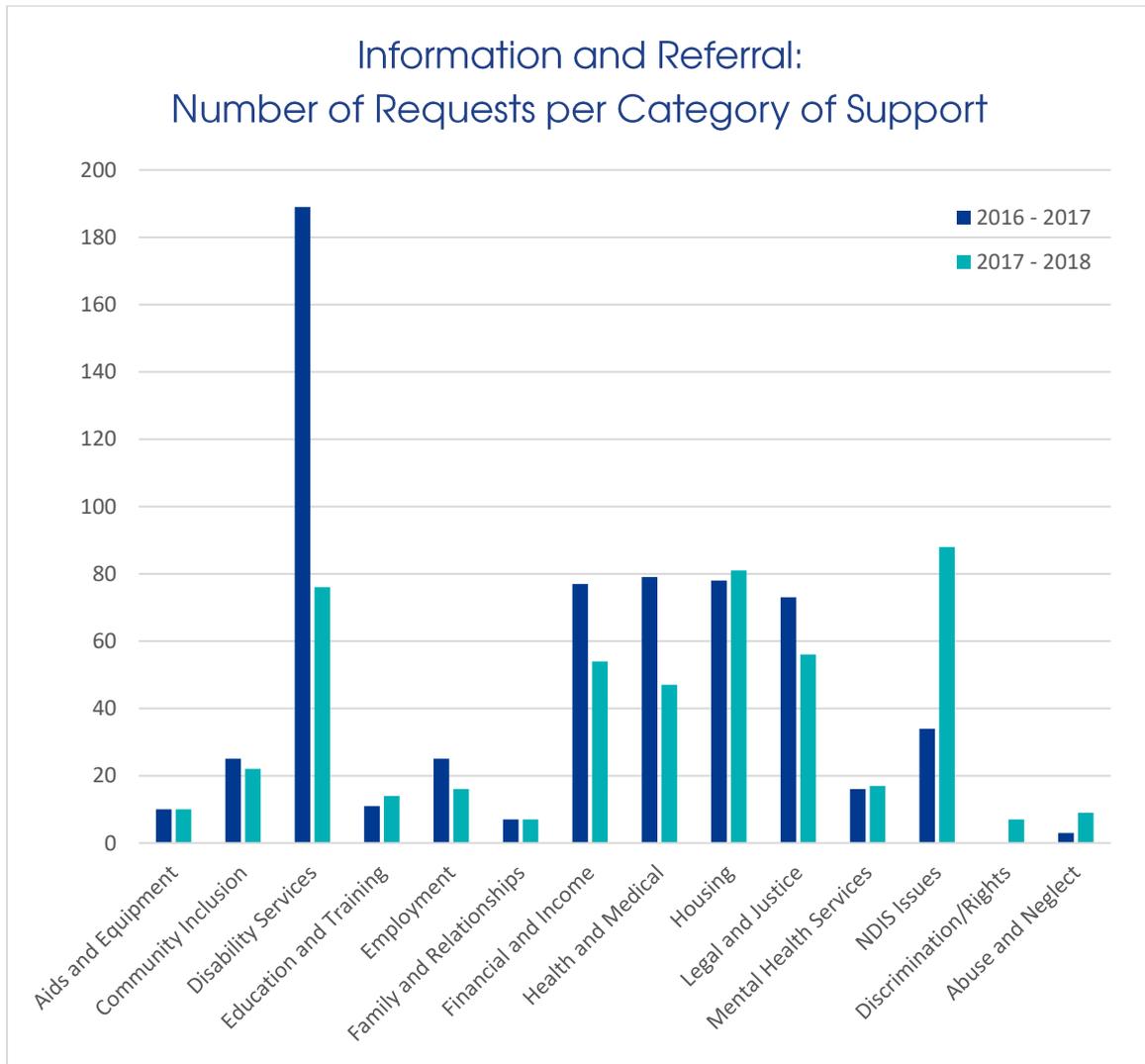
Explorability offers an Information and Referral service for people with disability, families and carers. Through this service, people can access information to assist with self-advocacy or family advocacy.

In addition, disability sector organisations, community services organisations, mainstream services and the broader community are able to access the Information and Referral Service for information relevant to people with disability, families and carers.



In 2017 - 2018, Explorability received 507 requests for information through the Information and Referral service, totalling 441 hours. Approximately 40 percent of the requests received were for information related directly to disability services and the NDIS.

The below graph shows a comparison of the the number of requests across the categories of support in 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018.



While there had been a reduction in the number of requests and corresponding hours of support provided through the Information and Referral service from the previous year, there was a significant increase in the demand for the Individual Advocacy service during this time.

Individual Advocacy

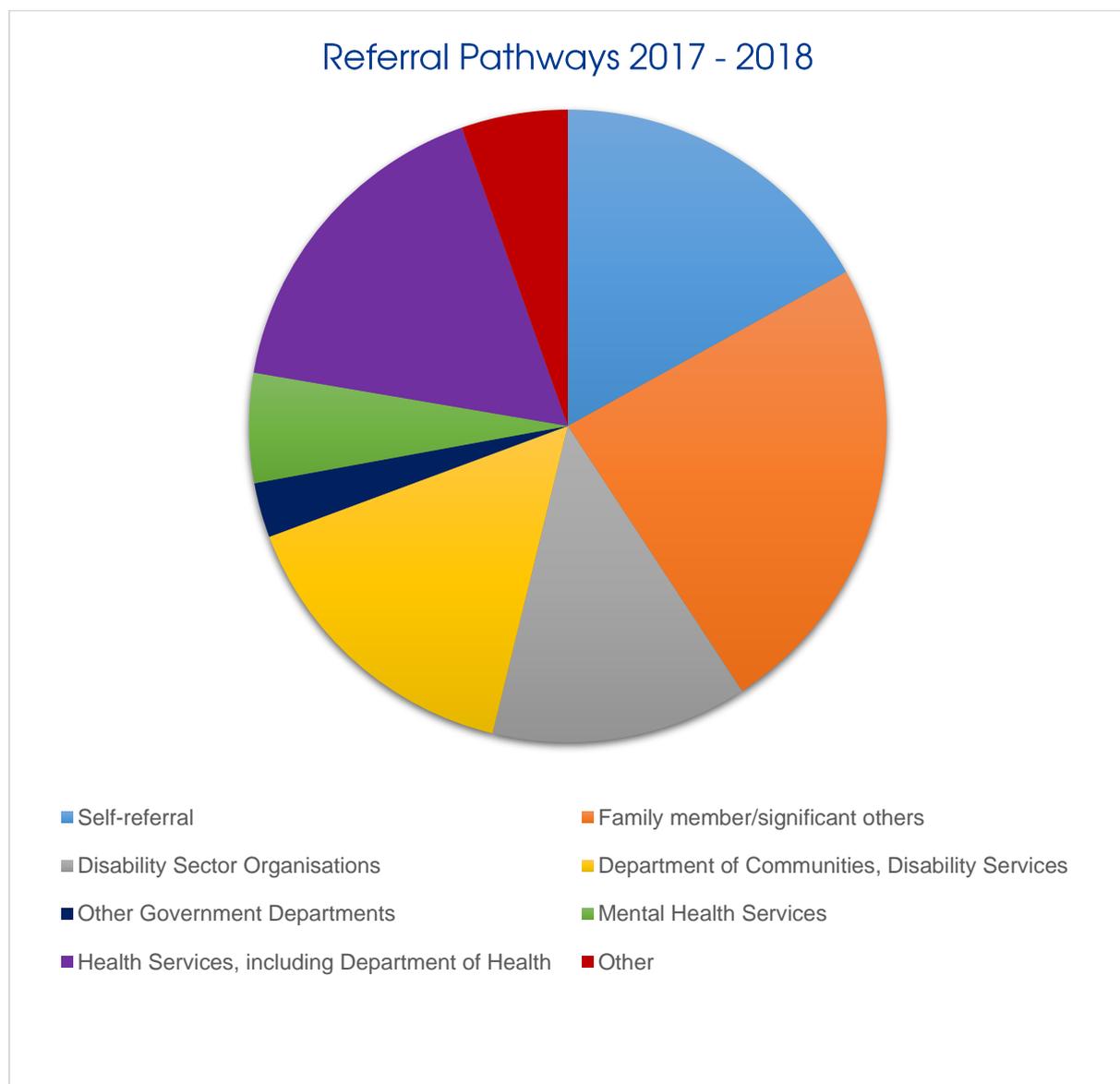


Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, Explorability supported 259 individuals for a total of 759 issues in the Individual Advocacy service. On the 1 July 2017, Explorability had 121 active individuals receiving a service with 138 new individuals accessing advocacy support throughout the year.

The number of referrals for individual advocacy grew significantly throughout the year and in October 2017, Explorability initiated a waitlist as it did not have the capacity to meet the increasing demand. The waitlist was in place for the remainder of the financial year and at its peak had almost 70 people waiting to receive advocacy support.

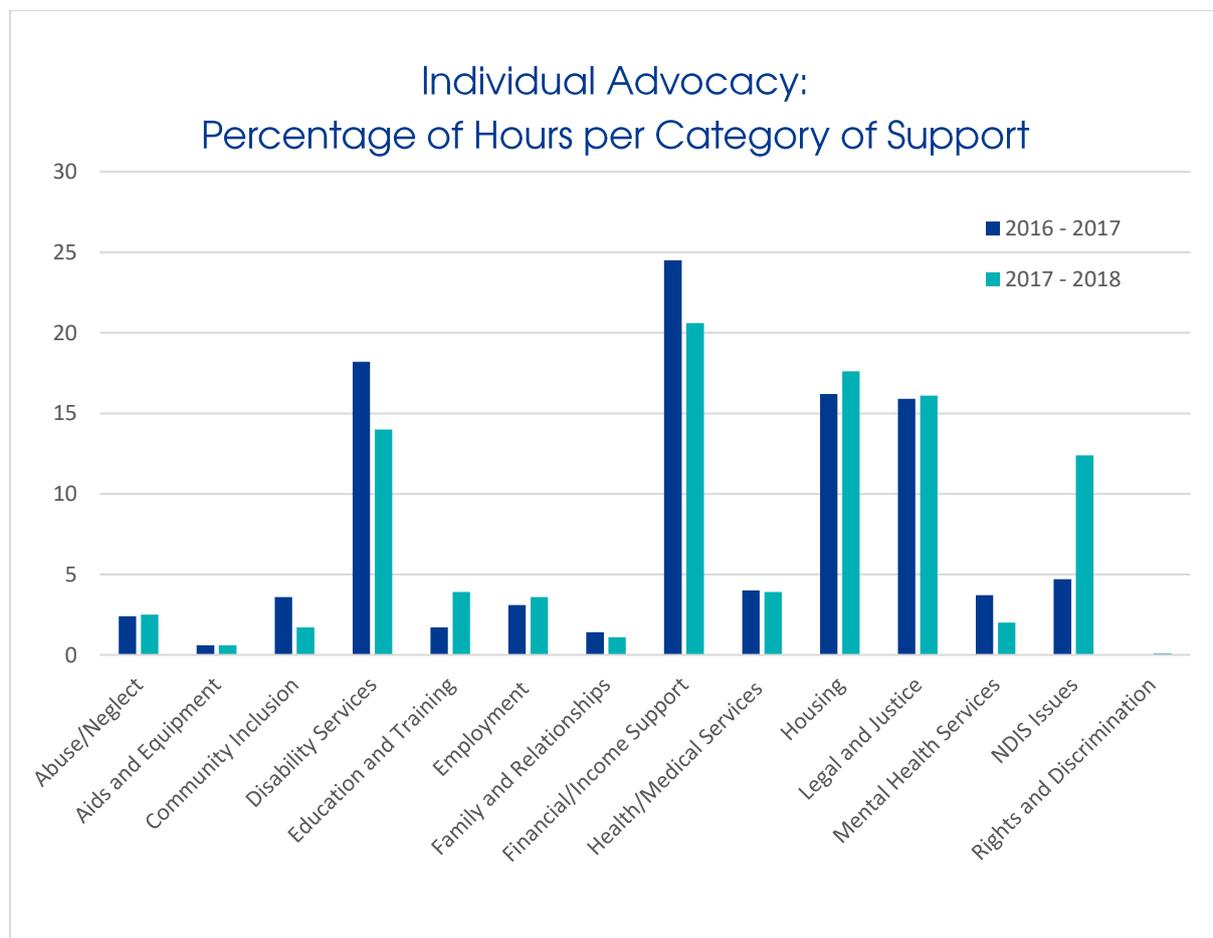
This increase in demand was experienced across the disability advocacy sector, with all advocacy organisations initiating waitlists. Following discussions with the Department of Communities, Disability Services, advocacy organisations, including Explorability, received additional non-recurrent funding to increase capacity to meet the growing demand for 2018 – 2019 financial year.

The referral pathways for the individual advocacy service include referrals from people with disability, family members, carers and significant others, disability sector organisations, community sector organisations, government departments and disability and health professionals. In 2017 – 2018, the main referral pathways were family members, carers and significant others (23.9%), people with disability (16.9%), health services (16.9%), Department of Communities, Disability Services (15.5%) and disability sector organisations (13%).



Approximately 46% of the individuals supported by Explorability had a cognitive disability as the primary disability. Other disability types included intellectual (10%), physical (15%), sensory (5%), neurological (7%), Autism Spectrum Disorder (12%) and mental health (6%). 91 individuals reported having a secondary disability with mental health (34%) and physical disability (30%) being the most prevalent.

Requests for support were most common in the areas of disability services, financial and income support, housing and legal and access to justice. The percentage of hours of advocacy support for 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018 per category of support are shown in the graph below.



While the graph shows a decrease in support for disability services from the previous year, there was a significant increase in support related to accessing the NDIS which reflects the introduction of the scheme across additional areas of the state throughout the year and the significant increase in requests for advocacy support related to this. From 1 July 2018, the categories of support used to report to Disability Services have changed and there will no longer be a distinction between the NDIS and non-NDIS sites.

Advocacy Vignette - James

James, who has a lived experience of a psychosocial disability, was living with a distant family member in a private rental when he was referred to Explorability by a support service. He was recovering from a long-term illness and this had also impacted on his general wellbeing and the current living situation was not ideal.

The support service reported that James had been taken off the public housing list as he had refused a house in a suburb of his choice for a reason that was related to his mental health. The reason had not been deemed by the Department of Communities, Housing (Housing) to be adequate or substantial enough to refuse the offer of a property.

Explorability was approached to support James through an appeal to request that he be reinstated on the Housing list. James indicated to the advocate that he was very stressed that he would not be able to have a home of his own and was worried that he would not be able to be assertive enough at the appeal, should it be granted.

The advocate supported James to complete an application for an appeal and subsequently attended the appeal with James. With support, James was able to explain the circumstances around which he had refused the offer of a house and what this meant for him into the future. The advocate was asked by the panel if she would be able to attend other house viewings and James agreed that this would help him with the process. The advocate advised that was possible and gave an undertaking that James would receive support in this area when needed. As a result, the appeal was upheld and James was placed back onto the Housing waitlist.

Vicki Bailey
Senior Advocate

Advocacy Vignette - Charlie

Explorability supported Charlie, who had a cognitive disability and mental health issues, and had been living in an acute mental health unit for almost a year as he was unable to live independently. Charlie had previously requested support through Disability Services but he had been deemed ineligible due to the mental health concerns.

The advocate supported Charlie and his family to re-apply for support through Disability Services on the basis of the cognitive disability, as his mental health issues were now stable. Charlie was referred for an updated neuropsychological assessment and it was agreed that it would occur in the mental health unit to assist Charlie to feel safe and be in a familiar environment.

As a result of the updated assessment, it was determined that Charlie was eligible for Disability Services on the basis of his cognitive disability. Explorability is continuing to support Charlie with the transfer to the NDIS and the development of a plan that will meet his needs.

Roslind Witham
Individual Advocate

Advocacy Vignette - Mika

Mika was referred to Explorability as she wanted to negotiate extra hours of support in her funding plan and to have her role as a new parent recognised in her goals. Due to a degenerative disorder, Mika was unable to physically provide the care to her new daughter and wanted to participate as much as possible in her role as a new mother. Due to the available funding at that time, Mika was expected to stay in bed for two hours in the morning while an agency attended the home to care for her daughter.

With support from Explorability, Mika highlighted the importance of her participating in the care of her daughter as opposed to support workers completing this without her. Developing a strong bond with her child and having the same opportunities as other parents to be involved in her daughter's care was a strong focus for Mika and the support provided by Explorability. Following ongoing negotiations, Mika's plan was changed to provide the appropriate level of funding to ensure that Mika was engaged in the support provided to her daughter whilst also ensuring that Mika received the appropriate level of support for her own needs.

Shelley Jones
Senior Advocate

Acknowledgements

Explorability wishes to acknowledge the Department of Communities, Disability Services for funding the Individual Advocacy Program and the support of the Service Contract and Development Officer, Ms Christy Dines.



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