Handout 1: Essential Elements of Systems Advocacy

Systems Advocacy occurs when a group of people come together to represent the interests of a community or sub group within a community. They do this to effect social and political change. Systems Advocacy is concerned with genuine life issues/needs and the welfare of groups in the community.

Systems advocacy involves:

- Engaging with the community; working with them to affect structural change in areas such as legislation, policy, and service provision.
- Supporting disadvantaged individuals and groups to bring about the structural changes required to meet their needs.
- Taking action to prevent negative changes, or to bring about positive changes in social policy areas, e.g. amending legislation or policy, increasing and expanding services, develop new services and improving access to services.

Key Features of Systems Advocacy include:

- It is not politically neutral rather it is on the “side” of the group/community.
- Minimal conflict of interest, i.e. the advocate demonstrates singular loyalty towards the group/community for whom they are engaged in systems advocacy.
- Has clear goals.
- Demonstrates determination in facing obstacles.
- Is long term.
- Is strategic.
- Is based on solid information, i.e. research to support claim/demand.

Effective approaches to systems advocacy involves:

- Assessment of the needs of the community.
- Identification of all stakeholders.
- Consultations.
- Development of effective partnerships.
- Lobbying members of parliament.
- Working with the media.
- Understanding the political context and environment.
- A capacity to work in an inclusive manner (with the target group affected by the issues).
- A capacity to work collaborative (with all the stakeholders).
Systems Advocacy is an important community sector activity because it:

- Is a way of recognizing structural inequalities in the community
- Helps to empower disadvantaged groups to address their needs
- Addresses issues pertaining to Human Rights
- Seeks to redress inequities in the distribution of government managed resources
- Facilitates the implementation of government policy
- Creates broader community awareness and develops a “groundswell” for social change
- Seeks to make changes in the way services are planned, managed and delivered
- Informs government of community needs, rights and expectations
- Provides the community with a “voice”
- Raises community awareness of the issue/problem/injustice.

Other ways of describing advocacy include:

- Sticking up for your rights and those of others
- Going to bat for someone else
- A person who argues, defends or recommends a course of action or submits a proposal
- A support, champion or representative
- Someone or an agency who uses their power to influence a decision.

Principles to be applied by Workers engaging in Systems Advocacy:

- Act in and represent the interests of the group/community
- Safeguard the interests of the community or group represented in the advocacy, e.g. identify areas of resistance and hostility
- Work in an inclusive & collaborative manner
- Keep group/community informed of progress of campaign including any barriers to that arise and the outcome of any action
- Maintain confidentiality.

Who Initiates a Systems Advocacy Program?

Systems advocacy can either be initiated by a worker and their agency (A PROACTIVE WORKER APPROACH) or by the community who invites the worker and their agency to assist them in the process of social change (A REACTIVE WORKER APPROACH). When working proactively the worker identifies the need for action on an issue and works with the community educating them about the issue, consulting with them to obtain their perspectives on the issues and seeking their active support for the advocacy.

A reactive approach also calls for a needs assessment to validate the views of the community. It also requires networking and consultation to gain cross sectional community support.
Handout 2: Strategies in Systems Advocacy

- **Needs assessment and community consultation**: assists in identifying and prioritizing the communities needs and concerns. This assists in focusing the effort of the systems advocate. It also helps to validate the concerns of the community and helps to justify the need for action on an issue.

- **Submissions** reporting upon the impact of policy, legislation and other social economic and political factors that impact upon disadvantaged groups.

- **Lobbying**: Talking to bureaucrats, Members of Parliament and other power brokers in the community about how the issues effects the community you represent.

- **Direct Action**: More militant and confrontational activities. Includes Petitions, Boycotts, Street Marches, Sit-Ins, Green bans.

- **Media**: Includes press releases and Interviews with print and electronic media.

- **Public Meetings**: Are organised to promote community awareness and to increase “ground swell” in the community. This helps to inform decision-makers of the community’s political power.

- **Strategic Partnerships**: This involves forming alliances with powerful groups within the community who can assist in the advocacy program.

Handout 3: Assessing The Community’s Needs

**What is a Community Needs Assessment?**

Community groups are usually formed when members of the community consider there is a need that must be met. While members of the group may be clear about WHO is in need, they may be unclear about HOW to meet this need and, WHAT strategies would be most effective.

The community management model sees participation as critical if the empowerment of the community is to be achieved. It is essential to consult the community about what their needs are and what they consider the most effective ways to meet those needs. Needs assessment is critical in the planning process if workers are to avoid imposing services/programs on target groups who have not been properly consulted.

**Why is a Good Needs Assessment so Important in Systems Advocacy?**

A good needs assessment involves rigorous, participatory research. It seeks to:

- develop an information base on the issue/need/problem effecting the community
- validate community concerns therefore legitimizing the advocacy effort
- locate evidence of need to support a submission for government grants or changes in to other areas of governance and/or legislation
• provides evidence of need and the impact of this need on a population group. This helps to inform a response to government and other power brokers on their policies and activities.

What Does a Community Assessment Involve?

• Issue/s Identification
• Identification of Key stakeholders or WHO the issue effects
• An understanding of how the issue affects them
• Gathering ideas and information through consultation
• Gathering & Collation of Expert Evidence which can validate the experiences and perspectives of the community
• Identifying the priorities and action that is needed.

A Model for Assessing Community Needs

Objective: (Clear statement on WHAT you want to research).

Rationale: reason/s why this is an issue which needs to be addressed by systems advocacy.

Background: to the issue. This includes socio-demographic data, changes in the population, community needs and the social and economic impacts upon the population.

Strategies/Tasks: what are the research methods that will be used to collect the evidence of need? For example surveys, focus groups, public meetings, review of academic literature, expert support for need etc.

Responsibility: which workers and community members will be responsible for the needs assessment.

Time Frame: what are the deadlines for different components of the activities.

Resources: what types of physical and human resources are needed to complete the needs assessment?

Ethical Issues in Assessing Community Needs

Privacy and Confidentiality: Professional community service workers are required to comply with the rights of clients to privacy of information. In practice this means information about clients cannot be used without their prior knowledge and consent. An analysis of client data kept by the service is permissible as long as it does not reveal any identifying information about the client. Similarly, information gathered at consultations must not contain any identifying information.

When conducting community consultations, it is critical that intending participants are provided with information about the project to enable them to make an informed choices about participating. It is similarly not ethical to seek information about
particular experiences other than in a general way, e.g. “do you think…” type questions rather than “have you experienced…”

Referencing: All documents and data used in the research must be identified and sourced correctly.

**Supporting the Case for Change - Collecting Expert Evidence of Need**

Another critical component of your community needs assessment project is about identifying and gathering reports from field experts, including academics and practitioners, who have researched and even published in areas of concern to your community. For example, if you are researching issues relating to family violence you will need to look at current literature on this subject in order to support the outcomes of the research, that is to provide evidence at a broader level of the importance of this issue.

In addition, it is important to identify the relevant government legislation and policy. This should be examined as part of the need’s analysis. The government’s legislative and policy framework is recognition of the importance of this issue in the context of the state’s service framework and a statement of the state’s policy intentions.

One way of increasing the level of understanding about a need within a community is to examine published socio-demographic statistics and present them as part of the evidence of community need.

For example, if you were conducting research on the groups effected by poverty within a particular community, you would need to examine ABS data with particular attention to:

- total number in the community
- the age groups
- gender
- income levels
- accommodation types
- education
- health status
- occupation
- family size.

As with literature, the sources of data must appear at the point of use and also appear in the appendices.

It is important to note that not all published data is reliable. Even data coming from reliable sources may not be current or valid in terms of your research concerns. The Australian Bureau of census collects data from every household every six years. It is usually about 12 months before early data from each census is released. Researchers when using ABS census data can be using statistics that are between 6 months and 6 years old. This means it may be necessary to find more recent data from other sources.
to ensure the accuracy of the statistics. Other sources of statistics include the Australian Bureau of Crime Statistics (across most areas of crime and provides comparative data to demonstrate increase or decrease in criminal activities), Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (settlement data of those recently arrived) and Centrelink (utilization rates across various benefit types).

To make the most of other people’s research it is best to approach it with a critical mind. Some things you might wish to consider are:

- How useful is the research? Does it present any new information that enhances your understanding of a particular social situation?
- Does it present information to you in a new way? That is does it take information you are already aware of and analysis it in a way that changes your thinking in the area?
- What is the ideology of the research? What political agendas seem to be operating?
- Who conducted the research? Who was the research prepared for and why? Who are the political masters of the project?
- What types of research methods were used on the project? What are some advantages and disadvantages of these methods?
- How are the key concepts defined in the research? Are these appropriate definitions? How do these definitions influence the information that has been collected?
- Did the research develop from a comprehensive understanding of the social situation it is studying?
- How reliable and valid are the research methods?
- How accessible is the research? Is it open to public scrutiny?

Handout 4: Conducting Consultations

What is a Consultation?

Consultation is the process of actively seeking the views of existing and potential consumers. It is also about providing an opportunity for consumers, their families and carers to provide feedback on the way services are delivered.

The term “consultation” is the language used for:

- Providing information
- Seeking participants views and feedback
- Way of generating new ideas
- Opportunity for participants to influence final decisions
- To a population or target group, PRIOR to final decisions being taken.
Why Consult?

The process of consulting achieves a range of important objectives including:

- Informing the service about current consumer’s needs
- Providing feedback on existing service delivery and ways of enhancing these
- Developing a positive relationship with consumers and other services within which solutions to issues can be negotiated
- Identifying community concerns and priorities for new services or programs
- Providing information about changes and potential changes
- Facilitating the planning of services
- Conducting research to determine community needs/expectations and aspirations.

Embarking on a consultative process is often perceived as being a difficult and cumbersome exercise, but increasingly government agencies providing funding to services are requiring active participation by the consumer group.

Participation by consumers of the service are then provided with an opportunity to “shape” the type of services they require, and how they are delivered.

It is therefore an opportunity for the service provider to enhance the service outcomes for consumers.

Principles to Guide a Consultative Process

Prior to organising a consultation, it is important to be clear about:

- Who should be consulted
- How (methodology could include invitation to a central and appropriate venue, or a “phone-in, or at the place where people meet)
- Who is responsible for organising the consultation
- What needs to be organised
- Duration of consultation
- Feedback on the process - Transparent communication channels increase participants confidence
- Cost of consultation (venues, interpreters, refreshments)
- Place of consultation, bearing in mind accessibility for people with disabilities, transport access
- Time of consultation - this will be dependent on target group.

How to Conduct Consultations

In order to maximise consumer participation, any of the methods or combination of methods can be used:

- Meetings which have been promoted and are held in an advertised venue
• Tapping into existing specific networks that work with population groups with additional needs For example CALD, ATSI, disability, age specific groups
• Seeking to consult with formal and informal groups
• Talking to direct and indirect government service providers, e.g. Community Health Centres
• Talking to Religious leaders/Community Leaders.

Consultation Tools

• Questionnaires/ surveys
• Submissions
• ‘Phone-ins’
• Face-to-face interviews
• Group interviews
• Public meetings.

Strategies to Maximise Consumer Participation

• Have potential constraints been identified (religious observance or cultural events)?
• Is the venue for the consultation accessible to consumers with a disability?
• Has the need for interpreters, signers been identified?
• Have interpreters and /or signers been booked?
• Has the need for transport been identified and arranged?
• Is the intended meeting times suitable?
• Are seating arrangements flexible?
• Can participation be further encouraged through personal contact?
• Have community and/or religious leaders being contacted?
• Ensure that there is prior knowledge of the consultation & endorsement of it at a senior level
• Use staff with expertise & skills in consulting
• Devolution of responsibility for decision-making to ensure greater responsiveness & flexibility.

Handout 5: Writing Up the Findings of the Needs Assessment and Community Consultation

Once the community needs assessment has been completed, it is important to present the information you have gathered and its analysis in a manner that is “user” friendly, thus enabling the to pave the way to planning and conducting the advocacy campaign. The following is a suggested format for documenting research.

• Title Page (report title, author/editor, publisher, funding body)
• Copyright statement
• Acknowledgements (who participated within the limits of confidentiality)
• Executive Summary
• Background/Introduction: Who the service is and information about the population target group and geographical area
• Methodology (how you went about it, e.g. established an advisory group of key stakeholders to inform the project and provide expert advice)
• Literature Review (a summary of published research that helps to shed light on the issues facing the community)
• Community Profile (a summary of the demographic characteristics of the community and a description of the services available to respond to the needs which arise as a result of these characteristics)
• Outcomes of Consultations
• Analysis/Summary
• Recommendations.

Researchers are not to:

• Publish or interpret data in ways that are unfair to parties involved in the inquiry
• Falsely endorse work which they know to be inadequate
• Publish work which is not their own or which does not contain a significant amount of their own contribution
• Publish confidential material without the participant's permission
• Inhibit publication of any critical reviews of their work.

It is the researcher's responsibility to acknowledge the contributions of all participants concerned in any aspects of a social research.

**Handout 6: Facilitating Change on a Political Level**

Campaigns can be organised in response to government policy or proposed legislation and policy. A successful campaign is:

• Creative
• Informs the community
• Arouses public sympathy
• Uses tactics that do not obscure the message
• Benefits the cause
• Has many facets
• Develops positive momentum.

Therefore, a campaign includes all actions that can arouse public opinion against a policy or in favour of a policy. It includes action, which aims to effect economic, social or legal changes in the community.
Handout 7: How to Plan and Conduct a Campaign

Key Consideration in Planning the Campaign

- DETERMINE THE OBJECTIVE - WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- IDENTIFY THE STAKEHOLDERS:
  - Identification of the Target Group & Interest Groups
  - Shared responsibility.

- IDENTIFICATION OF CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES:
  - How can this be achieved?
  - How is the target group to be included?
  - What is the time frame?
  - What are the costs?
  - Addressing special needs groups (ATSI, CALD, PWD, Women)
  - Who needs to know – Effective Promotion to Maximise Participation & Outcomes
  - Anticipating Potential Barriers
  - Deciding upon the most effective strategies (lobbying; direct action; media releases, submissions petitions).

- CONDUCTING THE CAMPAIGN.

- DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS & OUTCOMES.

- EVALUATING THE PROCESS/OUTCOME:
  - What did we do right?
  - What did we do wrong?
  - How could we have done it better?

Handout 8: Community Participation and Empowerment

One of the most important principles in systems advocacy is that of community participation. The aim of participation is to empower the group/community with the requisite knowledge and skills. The practice of empowerment involves the development of opportunities and the support of groups and communities to participate in a process in which they have a powerful role.

The Benefits of Public Participation:

- Decisions can be more effective if the needs and experiences of the clients are sought
- Threats to the campaign can be revealed
• Creates incentives to produce safe and effective products (services) and ensure safe work practices
• Can reveal poor work practices, and ensure there is no gain for shoddy work.  

**Empowerment is about:**

• Power over resources, e.g. finances & human
• Power of information
• Power in the decision making process.

“Empowerment is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal and political power so that individuals can take action to improve their lives” (Lorraine Gutierrez, 1991).

“Empowerment is a process through which people and their communities gain mastery over their lives” (Christopher Brown, 1988).

**People Can Participate in Advocacy Processes by:**

• Lobbying parliamentarians and relevant (regulatory) bodies
• Making complaints about defective products (services)
• Participating in consultation opportunities
• Participate in public meetings, rallies, signing petitions, providing case studies
• Asking questions in parliament during question time
• Attending delegations to key people, e.g. members of parliament.

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**Handout 9: Key Stakeholders/Community Partners**

Effective systems advocacy requires research to understand the needs and issues that need to be advocated for. It also depends upon developing collaborative partnerships that are designed to work collectively on the issues, share resources and the workload and thus maximising outcomes for the client groups.

Once the issue has been determined, it is important to identify the people who have most to gain from the process and its outcomes. This will inevitably include people within your own organisation, workers in ‘like’ services, the population group/s most affected and those formal/informal structures that support their interests. The involvement of others in both the planning, implementing and monitoring of the process provides opportunities for:

• Expert advice in the management of the community needs assessment
• Ensures the participation of services and population groups who may otherwise not be aware of the need and the needs assessment
• Encourages ownership of the process and of its outcomes.
For example, if you were assessing the needs/issue affecting women and their children experiencing domestic/family violence and child protection issues, some of the key stakeholders/community partners would be:

- Women’s services working in the provision of early intervention, community education, direct services, eg. accommodation, health, & legal
- Mainstream, i.e. government or government funded services
- Interagencies, networks and forums working on this issue
- Child protection services
- Women experiencing or who have experienced domestic/family violence (bearing in mind issues of consent to participate, right to refuse, confidentiality)
- Peak agencies.

The Business of Welfare The ins and outs of Community and Business Partnership Programs (Source: Geraldine Skinner, Director, Community Business Partnerships).

Over the last 50 years or so, in response to a proliferation of community concerns and causes, the number of community organisations has grown considerably. Estimates vary depending on definitions, but it is safe to say that Australia has more than 200,000 non-profit organisations, ranging from animal refuges sporting clubs, right through to support centres for disadvantaged members of society and charities as big as the Red Cross.

Competition has stretched scarce resources and the public capacity for support has been strained. Partnerships with business are one way of addressing this challenge. They can provide a new source of support and deliver outcomes that benefit not only community groups but also the business itself.

At their best they can also assist in finding more efficient and long-term solutions to community issues. They can build both bonding and bridging social capital.

**Getting Into Partnerships**

Partnerships are relationships and they don’t just happen overnight. Like interpersonal relationships, they often start small and develop slowly over time. They can begin with chance meetings or via mutual contacts.

But it is true that relationships can also be carefully planned. There are some key steps in this process.

**Selecting a Partner**

It is important that potential partners are a good match – that they have similar or complementary interests and values.

First you need to be clear of the external “personality” of your own organisation. You need to have a clear understanding of your own organisation and what distinguishes it from others. Values, clientele, location, subject matter are all importance.
After you have assessed your own organisation it is time to do the same for any possible partners. Research your potential partner extensively by personal inquiry, media articles, trade magazines, annual reports and websites.

**Preparing the Approach:**

Before the approach is made make sure you are clear on what you expect and what can be achieved. There are three key questions:

1. **What do you want?** You may be looking for funding, pro-bono professional advice, volunteers, goods-in-kind, assistance with advocacy or a combination of these.

2. **What are you able to offer your potential partner?** You may be able to offer a raised public profile, access to key markets, staff benefits, brand or profile building, a useful network of contacts, skills that the partner organisation does not have, increased media coverage.

3. **In what time frame do you want these goals reached (long-term, short-term)?** It should be remembered that mutual benefit generally builds over time.

**Approaching Partners:**

Once you are clear about what type of organisation you are approaching, what you are hoping to achieve and how it can be achieved, it is then time to find the right person to contact. This doesn’t mean preparation of a lengthy and detailed written submission. It means starting the dialogue.

The right person may not necessarily be the Chief Executive or General Manager. It could be the Community or Public Relations Officer or Sponsorship Manager.

Depending on the type of partnership being proposed, you may want to approach a different section of the potential partner’s organisation. If you are proposing to increase brand image or media coverage it may be more suitable to approach the marketing or communications manager. If you anticipate your partnership will have a staff involvement component you may benefit by contacting the Human Resources Manager.

These initial meetings are important in assessing the fit or the chemistry between the partners, to find out whether there is potential for development of a relationship. It is important to stress that you are not simply asking for funds.

**Reaching an Agreement:**

For an agreement to be reached from both partners it is important that the relationship be approached openly and honestly. This is necessary from the beginning of the relationship. Both partners must be explicit about their expectations of the partnership. A good example of this is in pro bono work. It needs to be clear from
the beginning that the client should be treated the same as paying client, not put to the bottom of the pile when commercial clients deadlines clash.

Documenting the agreement is sensible so that the corporate memory is not lost if particular personnel move on. In some cases, it may also be appropriate to draw up a formal agreement or contract.

**Maintaining the Relationship:**

Like any other relationships, partnerships need to be nurtured and carefully maintained. Open and regular communication, both formal and informal is the key. In more extensive and formal partnerships, performance indicators and benchmarks established at the outset provide a basis for discussion and useful feedback.

**What Can Come Out of Partnerships?**

Partnerships can provide various benefits that have often been summarised under the banner of the 7 Ps:

- Product
- People
- Premises
- Purchasing Power
- Promotion
- Power
- Profit.

More fundamentally, though the outcome of partnerships is increased sustainability for organisations, particularly when partnerships become more formal and agreements are in place for several years.

Predictability about the level of resources allows organisations to plan ahead with confidence.

Interestingly a recent study undertaken by the Business Council of Australia, in conjunction with the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs has demonstrated that sustainability is also one of the main reasons that businesses enter partnerships.

The great majority of companies in the study supported involvement with the community as part of an expanding social role that contributes to the continuing health and growth of their businesses. Long-term business sustainability, not profitability, was at the heart of corporate community involvement. The benefits businesses recognise are in the boost to intangible assets – reputation, community support and the ‘licence to operate’.

And perhaps that is the bottom line for the community as well - that partnerships founded on mutual respect and delivering reciprocal benefits will contribute to the sustainability of society.
Partnership Model

The partnership model, premised on collaboration, is described as a mechanism for enabling government, services contracting agencies and contractors to join together as partners in joint ventures designed to maximise the outputs of a state or community human service system through collaborative action.

Other key features of the partnership model are:

- It works to strengthen the relationship with other service providers
- It promotes flexibility and negotiation in the development and
- Management of service agreements
- It is cautious in experimenting with different models of service
- Delivery
- It promotes specialisation amongst service providers; and
- It makes purchasing decisions based on the stability and
- Maintenance of the service system.

(DoCS: 2001) Full reference needed.

Handout 10: Public Meetings

Another useful strategy to inform the community about the campaign and further develop a “ground swell” of interest and increase participation is to hold a Public Meeting to:

1. To present information on the issue
2. To gather information
3. To promote the issue to a broader section of the community thus gathering “momentum”
4. To enhance reputation, credibility thus increasing community participation and increasing political strength for the campaign
5. To put pressure on decision-makers
6. To seek endorsement for further action
7. Seek a reputable/popular community person to speak at the public meeting.

Promotion of Public Meeting

In order to ensure the community for whom you are working is aware of the public meeting, plan an effective promotional strategy. This can be done by using:

Flyers: This can include flyers posted to local community services, schools, health centers and placed in key locations, e.g. shopping centers.
Media: Send a media article to the local print and electronic media and invite them to attend.
Newsletters: Ask other services to include an article about the issue and public meeting in their newsletters.
Conducting the Meeting

The usual rules and process about meetings will also apply to this public meeting. It can follow the traditional agenda, i.e.

- Welcome/Apologies
- Explanation of the Issue/progress report
- Talks by invited guests
- Responses/comments from the floor
- Further action
- Summary/Close.

Handout 11: Australia's System of Government

Australia has three spheres or types of government: Federal, State and Local. The Federal Government covers the whole of Australia. There are six state and two territory governments. Within each state and the Northern Territory hundreds of local Councils look after local areas.

Today each sphere of government has an elected body that makes key decisions. Each has been established to respond to the needs of the people for the area it covers and in specific areas in which it operates. Some service areas involve all three levels of governments. For example all three levels of government play a role in the provision of health care.

Your local council is established to support and represent the local community and to reflect the differences of your area. Councils plan for the future of communities, raise issues with other government and provide a range of services that may differ from area to area.

Councils can make local laws but operate within a legal framework set up by State and Territory governments. They raise most of their funds from rates on land and buildings. The leader of the Council is usually known as the Mayor.

Services include: environmental protection, recycling and rubbish collection, libraries, development approvals, building roads and footpaths, parks and gardens, traffic and parking control, sports facilities, community centres and aged care.

State and Territory Government

State and Territory governments manage most of the laws affecting citizens and many public services.

State Governments can make laws in any area not given to the Federal Government by the Australian Constitution. They raise funds from a variety of business and transaction taxes such as payroll tax and stamp duty. The leader of a State is called the Premier.
Responsibilities include: Police, court and prisons, building State highways, schools, public hospitals, and many utilities such as water and power supply.

**Federal Government**

The federal or national government is sometimes called the Commonwealth of Australia.

Federal Government laws overrule those of State and Territory Governments where there is a conflict. It raises most of its funds from income tax. The leader of the Federal Government is called the Prime Minister. The Federal Government meets in Canberra, the national capital.

The Federal Governments job is to decide on matters which affect the whole country, like: foreign affairs, defence, trade, telecommunications, postal services, social services, notes and coins, banking, immigration, national highways and unemployment benefits.

**Your Who's Who of the Federal Parliament**

- Local member - often your first point of call, depending on your politics. In theory, they should be sympathetic to your complaints and have some local knowledge.

- Government Ministers - a useful influence for your cause. A list of Government Ministers can be found in the Parliamentary Handbook or by phoning parliament.

- Cabinet - this is the inner circle of Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister. It is a very powerful group which gets to decide on policy making decisions both inside their portfolio and in other areas.

- Opposition M.P’s - can be useful to speed up your case. If a letter goes to the government from an Opposition MP, it will be dealt with faster than if it just came from a member of the public. However, be wary of your issue becoming a political slanging match.

- Democrats/Independents - since the 1993 election, these groups have held the balance of power in the Senate which gives them a much greater influence than they otherwise would have. Some unions actually use the Democrats to get their social justice policies up, rather than go through the ALP.

- Parliamentary Standing Committees - these are made up of groups of MPs from both sides of the house who recommend policy, hold inquiries and call for public submissions. These can be a very good vehicle for change - but be prepared to wait. Some of their hearings can go on for months or even years.

- Ministerial staff - every Minister appoints his/her own staff to handle the areas of media, policy, speechwriter, political adviser and appointments. The
Minister depends on these staff and therefore they are good people to have onside as they can be very influential.

- Department heads - these are top level bureaucrats appointed by the government. Every government department has to submit an annual report to Parliament which has an organisational chart and other valuable information. You can also use the Commonwealth Directory for contacts. Departments prepare briefings for ministers on issues relevant to their portfolio.

- Senators - members of the Upper house should not be forgotten during your lobbying process.

- Parliamentary Secretaries - this group act as executive assistants for Ministers. They are often ear-marked for a spot in the ministry. They are a useful source of information as they have access to Cabinet papers.

Given the jurisdiction of government lobbying politicians and working with them to effect change is an important part of systems advocacy.

Handout 12: Working with Politicians

The role of your Member of Parliament (Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Council) is to advocate for the communities needs. Sometimes, the member will put a great deal of energy into your cause if they themselves have strong views about the issue, or it has the potential to affect a great number of their constituents, or if it enables them to criticise another political party. Other times they will contact the minister or department and provide letters of inquiry and seek to resolve the matter. They can be asked to speak at public meetings, and if the issue is one that they feel strongly about or the opportunity is provided within the election cycle, ie. close to an election, they may take the opportunity to do more than speak on the issue. Another important factor to consider is the media is more likely to take an interest in the campaign if the local Member of Parliament attending an event associated with it.

Delegations: Another form of lobbying is through delegations. A delegation is a group of people who represent a particular organisation and issue/s. For delegations to be effective advocacy tools, it is important to:

1. **Select** your delegates ensuring they are representative of the issue/target group. Ensure at least one person in the groups is articulate and able to present a comprehensive overview of the issue requiring discussion/action.

2. **Summarise** the main points in writing – to be included on the agenda for the meeting and enable the focus to be maintained.

3. **Meet Prior** to the meeting with delegates to maximise their information and prepare them for the meeting.
4. **Take Notes during the meetings:** appoint a note-taker for the purposes of having a record and reporting back to the main group.

5. **Ask questions:** The meeting will provide delegates for an opportunity to discuss the issue/s and ask questions that clarify or progress the discussion.

6. **Seek feedback** or follow-up meeting.

**Remember** to be prepared for the meeting. Gather relevant documents, seek clarification of other stakeholders views. Documents can also be accessed through requests to the government department and Freedom of Information.

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**Handout 13: Lobbying Politicians**

Lobbying is the process of influencing people to pursue an outcome, which is in the interests of the group/community.

The word lobbyist derives from a lobby, the public area used for interviews between Members of the House of Commons and their constituents or others. To lobby originally meant to seek to influence MPs to get a bill through Parliament. (Bleedin' Heart Media: Don't Let Australia Become the Homeless Country).

**Some Lobbying Tips**

- Before you make any meetings or appointments work out if your problem is a state/territory or a federal government issues.

- Try to arrange a meeting with an MP or Minister on the home ground of their electoral office. It’s easier and cheaper than going to Canberra and they are more likely to be relaxed and have time to listen to you.

- Fax or send a brief appointment letter. Offer a range of meeting times and dates as politicians have busy schedules. If you are going to meet at Parliament, it’s important to pick the correct time for a meeting. The best time to see a Minister is early in the sitting period (that is when Parliament is actually in progress) and early in the morning. At the end of the sitting periods and later in the day politicians can be frantic trying to get last minute business sorted out. Avoid meeting an MP immediately before or after Question Time as their attention will probably not be on your case.

- If you have to see department heads, committees, parliamentary secretaries or other MPs, try and arrange meetings on the same day. Remember to leave enough time between each meeting as bureaucrats and politicians are often late. Use the Minister’s staff to guide you around Parliament House.

- Research your issue before your meeting and any background information about the Minister’s portfolio that helps you understand theirs or her concerns.
• Try to identify a media angle to give the Minister the opportunity to exploit your issue. Good news is usually preferred, but something that is harmful to the Opposition is also welcomed. If you have some dirt on the government, then you should lobby the Opposition.

• Understand the parliamentary and government department process and policy making and options available to Ministers.

• If you are going to bag a Minister’s department, it’s not a good idea to have someone from the department there. However, you should inform the Minister’s advisers before the meeting.

• KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid). This approach should apply to your presentation. It should by easy to understand, as brief as possible.

• You should have the main points on a one-page handout so people in the meeting can follow your arguments and are left with the summary of your case. Other supporting documents should also be left behind in a briefing folder for the Minister and their staff.

• Ministers are usually well briefed by their staff, so don’t try bluffing them.

• Follow up your meeting with a letter, which restates the agreed positions or outcomes from your meeting.

• Keep in contact with the Minister’s staff. They’ve usually been selected because the Minister trusts them.

• Don’t forget the Minister usually has different staff in their own electoral offices. Treat them with the same respect as their Canberra staff.

• Carefully build support among other departments and MPs and parliamentary secretaries to help promote your case.

How to be a Successful Lobbyist

Lobbyist Stephen Woodward makes his living from getting the message of this social issue or that of his client through to the decision makers.

Woodward, who works mainly in the area of Government, is a former director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and recently returned to Sydney and is now the chief executive officer of the Australian Republican Movement (ARM).

He says: “Lobbyists usually seek a change to a circumstance or condition, such as a law, rule of regulation, or try to stop change --- that is, maintaining the status quo.”
Whatever his or her objective, Woodward says the following points are worth keeping in mind:

- Define your objectives precisely --- and decide before the heat of the debate what compromises you are prepared to make.

- Identify who supports your objective within the Parliament, the media and the community and prepare to mobilise your supporters. For example, it’s vital to have phone, fax and mailing lists researched, updated and checked for accuracy: you get no points for writing to the new Member for Woolloomooloo, addressing it to the former Member who was defeated at a previous election or sending a media release to identify who has the ability to ensure that the objective is delivered and how to influence them.

- Maintain your honesty, credibility, humour and equilibrium throughout the campaign. Extreme radicalism rarely succeeds.

- Unless you are in the business of producing miracles, ensure that your movement has sufficient resources (financial and human) to deliver the objective.

- Research your arguments and those of your opponents, thoroughly. Deliver your messages, particularly to politicians and the media, concisely and confidently.

- Be realistic at all times. Don’t try to please all of the people all of the time.

- Try to visit MPs or arrange other influential people to visit. Arrange for your supporters to write (in their own words, however sophisticated or simple: it is genuineness that is important) but face to face meetings are better.

- If you can’t do the job properly yourself, engage someone who can --- otherwise you will do your issues a disservice.

**Effective Lobbying and Opposition Management**

1. Define the issue and the outcome/s required.
2. Identify all players/stakeholders:
   - Obvious supporters and those who you think will be sympathetic to the issue
   - Establish a power base through networking, collaborative partnerships.
3. Identify those who are valuable sources of information, contacts with community members, can provide expert advice.
4. Work out ways of involving them thus enabling a sense of ownership.
5. Identify your opponents – who will work against you? What is their interest in the matter? What can you do to neutralise them? How will you respond to their position?
6. Attempt to diminish or dilute their position or influence by presenting a more informed case and by generating sympathy or support for your case.
7. Who makes the decisions? Public servants, policy makers, political advisers, politicians.
8. Establish time frames that are workable yet meet media/submission deadlines.
9. Ensure your information is well-researched and is supported by evidence as opposed to “hear say” and anecdotal information alone.

Commence the lobbying process with smaller issues and activities and building up to the main game. This process will enable you to establish “runs on the board”, i.e. credibility and further enhance your position to progress the issue. Make sure that those who are lobbying are aware of your power base and they will be able to make informed decisions on the impact on them in the event they are planning to refuse your request.

**Handout 14: Petitions**

Petitions can be a very effective way to lobby government but petitions for state/territory and commonwealth government require specific language and format for them to be accepted. However, petitions for local council do not require the same rules and can therefore be prepared in a more informal manner. It is important to gather the maximum number of completed petitions and sending them along with any other submission, policy response along with a covering letter that seeks a response. Language used for state/territory and commonwealth government is as follows:

To The Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament.

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that …(about your issues).

Your petitioners therefore request the House…….(your demands).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please return to (state your agency’s name and contact details).

**Handout 15: Dealing with the Media**

Using the media is an essential part of the fight or defend public and community interests. At a national and metropolitan level it is often a hard task to try to win media coverage. However, local media is often overlooked when campaigning, and it is here organisations and individuals can make a difference. You should be aware the media will not necessarily treat the story from the point of view you want.
Working with the Media – Some Tips

- Where possible, develop working relationships with the media to enhance your opportunities to have your media releases published and provide interviews.

- Be sure to have a current list of media contacts across both print and electronic.

- Don’t forget the use of the ethnic media or Indigenous Times, – reach all the audience not just some!

- Media Releases: If you decide to issue a media release, there is key information which must be included. This information includes the date it is issued; which groups are involved; and, most importantly, contact phone numbers for follow up phone calls, interviews etc. Make sure the numbers you give will be answered. If you give an office number, back this up with a mobile phone number or an after hours number.

- How do I approach the media? Do it in a business-like manner, either by letter, media release or phone. If, as in the case of the campaign launch, it warrants it, call a news conference.

- Does the story have a new angle? The trick is look for the latest development and publicise that. Different media have different needs - print needs pictures and words, radio needs sound, television needs images.

- Have you told the media about your event? Don't wait until the last minute before sending out your media release. Often papers have deadlines which are well in advance of publication days. A quick telephone call to your local newspaper or radio station will let you know their specific deadlines.

How to Present Effective Media Releases:

The first paragraph should include the "five W's" -- who, what, where, when, and why. Don't forget, your first goal is to get them to come to your event. If you have a high-profile person who will attract media, include his name in this first paragraph. Make sure:

- Source needs to be identifiable (agency letterhead)
- Brief and compact (short and to the point)
- Well presented (neat)
- Read like someone else wants to read it
- Use short sentences. Put your most important piece of information at the top. Each sentence should be a separate paragraph
- Use positive words. Use active voice (We have decided, rather then it has been decided)
- Simple (don’t assume anyone knows anything about your issue/s)
• **Quotes** (what you or someone else said) Make clear what are direct quotes by using quote marks
• Impact statement at the **beginning** of the story
• **Attractive** (appealing) heading
• Avoid jargon or mumbo jumbo. Proof-read (check your text) for errors
• Be **accurate and precise**
• Write in the third person (for example, "the protest group will hold a rally", not "we will hold a rally").

**Other Important Points**

• Be aware of **when** the paper goes to print – timing is everything
• **Don’t clash** with other significant events (you won’t be prioritised over the Prime Minister’s visit or a violent event)
• **Develop** contacts with the media – work up a good reputation
• **Appoint, support and train** One key spokesperson: It’s important to have one key spokesperson who can do any follow up interviews on your subject. By picking a spokesperson you make sure you get a consistent message across.

**Media Interviews**

Prepare yourself for the interview before the interview by jotting down the most significant points of your issue.

• Stay **focused** – don’t be drawn into other conversations
• Speak **clearly** – avoid workplace jargon
• **Be selective** – don’t raise too many issues
• Be **dramatic** – theatrical to maintain audience interest
• **Don’t** use statistical information – you will loose your audience
• Be on **time**
• **Select** your program – don’t provide interviews with known non-sympathisers
• Be clear on **how much time** you have
• If you don’t know the answer to a question – **repeat your story** in a different way – if challenged you can always say your issue was more important
• Where possible **ask for the questions** before you go on air – then you can consult with other colleagues for an appropriate response
• Be **firm** – don’t get angry
• Speak in **understandable language** – remember you are in other people’s lounge rooms, cars, etc.
• Always remember that your story is in **competition** with many others. Only seventeen minutes of each half-hour news show is actually news. When you consider time spent on sports, entertainment, weather, and other items the time is even shorter. Your event needs to be **interesting** enough to capture a few of those precious minutes
• If you have a story, get it out with **your own spin** instead of waiting for the other side to do their twist on the truth. If you know there is going to be a negative story, counter it someplace else first.
Creating A Media List

It is important to develop and maintain a list of print and electronic media outlets. The press mailing list should contain the name of the publication, station, or network, its address, and the names of people that you know at each location. While it is important to mail releases to the assignment desk, it is also important to target specific reporters with whom you may have already developed an ongoing relationship. It is all right to send multiple releases to the same place. Your story may not interest one person, but “hook” someone else.

If you have a computerized press mailing list, organize it according to type and reach of the media organization (i.e., local, national, religious, women, etc.), so that you can target specific areas when necessary. For instance, your story may be strictly a local story, and sending a press release to all of the national media outlets is inappropriate.

Handout 16: Tensions: Advocacy and the Development and Maintenance of Professional Relationships

Sometimes the fear of the development of tension and conflict within an organisation and with other workers in the community services industry can act as an inhibitor to advocacy.

There are some areas that require consideration and effort. It is therefore important to:

- Be clear on what it is you want to achieve
- Seek discussions with your workplace colleagues and identify ways of persuading colleagues or management members
- Conduct some research to ensure that the issue is of “client significance” and that of the workers
- Research outcomes will need to include the identification of the issues, who it affects, how many it affects, the impact on those affected, what you propose to do about it, and with whom
- Ensure information provided is done so in a courteous and professional manner
- Ensure the message sent is about change NOT ABOUT them
- Seek ways of working together in the interests of the “common good”
- Share tasks, costs and work out ways to share the decision-making process around strategies
- Ensure that clients are actively involved, or at least have that choice presented to them.
Handout 17: Direct Action

Direct action is often used as a key campaign strategy in systems advocacy. It describes activities that are organised, in the public domain and that demand a response. Direct action often arises from community frustrations at being overlooked, by-passed, ignored and repressed. However, as direct action is a public activity, it has the potential to be misrepresented by the media thus creating a backlash that will undermine the very objective underpinning direct action as a systems advocacy approach.

Examples of Direct Action

- **Delegations**: To politicians primarily responsible for making decisions in the defined issue area.
- **Letters Campaigns**: Letters written by a broad range of people and are sent directly to the responsible minister. These can be in the form of previously formatted letters or preferably person letters that are sent to the minister at the same time to create the required effect.
- **Petitions**: These must be addressed and written correctly. It is also critical to get as many signatories as possible and send these at the same time with a covering letter.
- **Media**: Appropriate use of the media either print or electronic media is another useful way to create and galvanise community support and demonstrate the community’s political power.
- **Letters of Support**: from mainstream organisations including peak agencies.
- **Boycotts**: This is an activity that encourages people NOT to use particular services or purchase products.
- **Graffiti**: Humour attacks on the target. However, this form of action usually backfires and encourages negative attention.
- **Street Theatre**: Performance in public places to generate interest and promote the issue.
- **Blockades**: Of buildings, streets and other places. This approach usually requires information to be provided to the police prior to the activity.
- **Marches**: An activity that provides those affected and their supporters an opportunity to deliver their message publicly. Marches in public places require organisers to inform police prior to the activity.
- **Sit-Ins**: Are held in offices of government departments, local councils to confront decision-makers. These are not legal activities and can have negative outcomes.
- **Symbolic actions & vigils**: Memorial events to further create community awareness and further enhance community participation in the cause.
- **Green Bans**: (similar to black bans) refers to the refusal by trade unions to work on developing land which needs environmental protection.
Handout 18: The Funding Process Rationale

**Funding submissions as a systems advocacy strategy:** Government funding is closely related to social policy and funding is usually available to community service organisations in line with the social policies adopted by the governments of the time. Governments rely on community-based organisations to help meet the social needs of people and to help governments achieve their social goals and meet their social obligations – for example, suicide prevention programs and child abuse initiatives.

A typical government funding process can be summarised as follows. Government:

1. Develops social policies (often as a reaction to the issues of the day, such as incidence of children dying as a result of child abuse, the Drug Summit etc)
2. Decides how much money will be available to implement social policies
3. Allocates funding through government budgetary processes
4. Sets priorities in terms of services to be provided and where they will be provided, based on needs based planning
5. Writes service specifications – that is, decides what information they want from organisations to prove that they are suitable recipients of funding
6. Calls for expressions of interest (EOIs) from community organisations - this is a competitive process and governments are looking for value for money
7. Assesses EOIs (this is often done by independent panels)
8. Compiles a report recommending who should get the funding
9. Minister approves funding allocations
10. Government department and community-based organisation sign a funding agreement specifying the target group and the accountability requirements
11. Funding is provided to community based organisation for a set period of time, for example, 12 months
12. Community based organisation accounts for how money is spent.

**The Funding Process**

A Key Outcome of a Systems Advocacy approach may be a decision to seek funding to develop new services or expand current services.

**The Process**

The funding application involves more than just filling in the form. Here are a number of issues to consider.

**Getting Support**

You will need the formal authority of your board or committee or supervisor at the outset. It is also wise to involve colleagues and other stakeholders within your organisation at an early stage to ensure their co-operation and assistance with the tasks that will need to be done. Also useful is the early involvement of organisations other than your own whose support will be needed or useful and who will be able to add their weight to your application.
Start Early

Work through the application form, identify what needs to be done, make a plan, allocating tasks and setting deadlines. It should include:

- Materials that may need to be collected or created for example you may need some of these:
  - certificate of incorporation
  - a copy of your constitution
  - your Annual Report and/or audited financial statements
  - your business plans
  - organisational structure
  - copies of current insurance policies
  - copies of your current policies such as occupational health and safety, equal opportunity etc.
  - job descriptions for the staff you intend to employ resumes of the people who will be employed or who will be important to the project
  - letters of support from other organisations
  - other attachments in support of your case copies of the minutes of the meeting at which your organisation formally agreed to apply for the funding
- Approvals that need to be obtained both from your own board or management committee and from any partners you may have in the project
- Time for an independent reading of the final draft preferably by someone who is removed from the original drafting
- Time for the necessary final signatures and approvals
- A time buffer to allow for the inevitable things that will go wrong
- Allow time for a final detailed reading of the draft by a suitably skilled person writing submissions.


Handout 19: Steps in Submission Writing

1. Acquire a copy of the terms of reference or guidelines
2. Provide evidence to back up your request, e.g. community profile, client data analysis
3. Collaborate with other services to ensure that the submission content is not been duplicated – form alliances if that becomes evident
4. Ensure all components of the submission are completed
5. Ensure the submission is neat and clear
6. Engage in lobbying to obtain letters of support and attach these to the submission
7. Contact your local member of parliament and seek their support.
Suggested Format for Submissions

- **Title**
- **Proposal Statement:** Brief statement of proposal (including groups to be served and total amount of budget)
- **Problems:** What problems will the program solve?
- **Objectives:** What does the program hope to achieve?
- **Justification of Need:** Include statistics, relevant data, reference to previous attempts locally or elsewhere
- **Why this alternative was chosen:** Refer to alternatives rejected and relevant supporting literature, if any
- **Plan of operation:** Detailed description of how the program will operate
- **Scope Population to be served Geographic area**
- **Community Description:** Socio-economic description of the community in which the project will operate
- **Project length:** Date of start of project, Date of end of project
- **Agency co-ordination:** What agencies are involved? Details of any co-ordination committee
- **Personnel:** Staff required, Job qualifications, Anticipated starting dates, Temporary, fulltime or contract
- **Administration, Structure, Function, Accountability of monies, Maintenance of records**
- **Facilities:** Where will project be housed? How will staff be accommodated?
- **Evaluation:** Assessment plan Who will carry out evaluation? What records will be kept? What are the measures of success?
- **Future Finance:** Where will ongoing funds come from after the grant runs out?
- **Budget may include the following:**
  - Staffing
  - Consultants fees
  - Travel Costs
  - Postal and telephone costs
  - Rentals of equipment, buildings
  - Capital costs
  - Consumable supplies.