



# Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

Our mission is to promote, protect and defend, through advocacy, the fundamental needs and rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland.

*Systems and Legal Advocacy for vulnerable people with Disability*

Position Title	<b>Paralegal</b>
Location	Queensland Advocacy Incorporated 2nd Floor, South Central, 43 Peel Street (cnr Merivale Street) South Brisbane Qld 4101
Industrial Instrument	Queensland Community Services and Crisis Assistance Award-State 2008 (QCSCA Award)
Classification	Level 3.1
Full time / part time	6 month contract – 4 days per week (0.8 FTE)
Position Reports to	Principal Solicitor
Date	20/12/17

## 1. Queensland Advocacy Incorporated Values

The appointee to this position will have a commitment to Queensland Advocacy Inc. (QAI) to promote and implement the values and philosophies of the organisation when conducting activities and actions related to their position.

## 2. Organisational Context

Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI) is an independent, community-based systems and legal advocacy organisation for people with disability. QAI's mission is to promote, protect and defend, through advocacy, the fundamental needs, rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland. The organisation does this by engaging in systemic advocacy through campaigns directed at attitudinal, law and policy change, and by supporting the development of a range of advocacy initiatives in this State.

As QAI is a social advocacy organisation, it works to uphold the principles of fundamental human rights, social justice and inclusion in community life by:

- taking positive, ethical action
- being on the side of people with disability
- being understanding of their position and vulnerability
- being independent with minimised conflicts of interest
- focussing on fundamental needs, welfare and interests
- doing advocacy with vigour and a sense of urgency
- remaining loyal and accountable over time
- acknowledging the costly nature of advocacy.

People involved with QAI therefore believe that people with disability:

- are as valuable as any other human beings, regardless of what they can or cannot do
- need to live well and have the same opportunities in life as other people
- are part of the relationships and connections of ordinary life and can participate and contribute to the rich and diverse fabric of our communities

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**2nd Floor, South Central, 43 Peel Street, STH BRISBANE QLD 4101**

**QAI endorses the objectives, and promotes the principles, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

- should not be segregated, congregated or isolated on the basis of disability.

### 3. Individual Advocacy Services

Since it was established in 1988 Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (**QAI**) has worked predominantly as a systems advocate in the interests of people with disability. In 2008, QAI expanded its work to include ongoing legal and non-legal individual advocacy services.

The **Human Rights Legal Service** provides legal advice, casework, information and referral to people with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment in matters which impact their fundamental human rights, including in relation to restrictive practices, substitute decision making matters, and forensic orders (disability). This includes representation before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The **Mental Health Legal Service** assists people who are subject to involuntary treatment and detention within Queensland's mental health system by providing legal representation, advice, information and referral services, including representation before the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

QAI's **Justice Support Program** is a non-legal advocacy service, supporting people with disability charged with a criminal offence to remain in the community and prevent further entrenchment in the criminal justice system.

QAI also provides **NDIS Appeals** advocacy support and referral to people with disability and their families. The objective is to ensure that all people with disability and other affected persons have:

- Access to a support person, for applicants seeking review of NDIA plans and or decisions; and
- Access to legal services, in circumstances where a case raises complex or novel legal issues, for applicants seeking an external merits review in the AAT.

QAI's individual advocacy services are also committed to providing community legal education, engaging in law reform, and working with QAI's systems advocates to achieve systemic change to improve the lives of people with disability.

These services are primarily funded by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. Income is also generated from an arrangement with Legal Aid Queensland to provide representation services to people appointed a lawyer by the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

### 4. Position Statement

The paralegal is to provide administrative support primarily to the lawyers in the Mental Health Legal Service. This will include entry into the client management database, preparation of files, drafting of correspondence and client contact to gather information, take initial instructions, and provide information and referral. The paralegal may also be asked to support the work of other staff of QAI. While the paralegal will work under close supervision and guidance, they are also expected to be able to work independently and take initiative.

## 5. Key Position Responsibilities and Accountabilities

### ***Paralegal role***

Under supervision from QAI lawyers and advocates, the paralegal provide administrative support including:

- a) Open client files, including taking initial client instructions, entry into the client management database, preparation of hard copy file and opening file correspondence;
- b) Close client files, including liaising with the client, preparation of closing file letter and finalising hard copy files;
- c) Provision of information and referral in relation to enquiries for assistance;
- d) Legal and practical research;
- e) Preparation of submissions, court documents and correspondence;
- f) At times, providing extended assistance to clients within the scope of QAI's individual advocacy services, including advocacy before the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

### ***Administration***

- g) Keep and maintain client files and records in accordance with requirements of the *Legal Profession Act*, the National Association of Community Legal Centre's Risk Management Guide the policies and procedures of QAI.
- h) Participate in casework file reviews meetings.

### ***General***

- i) Participate in staff meetings, planning workshops and other meetings in connection with the operation of individual advocacy services and QAI.
- j) General office teamwork and assistance.
- k) Undertake own word processing and administrative tasks.
- l) Undertake training required to perform the above duties.
- m) Carry out any additional duties within the scope of the position as directed by the Director or Principal Solicitor

## 6. Requirements of the Position:

### ***Values, skills, knowledge:***

- a) Strong commitment to human rights, social justice and diversity
- b) Senior law student, or experience in office administration in a legal environment.
- c) Experience in legal practice.

- d) Demonstrated attention to detail and highly developed organisational skills to maintain records within a resource-poor community based service.
- e) Excellent interpersonal & verbal communication skills including the ability to communicate sensitively with clients and other people from diverse backgrounds.
- f) Excellent written skills, including ability to convey information in simple English.
- g) Good knowledge of the welfare and/or disability sector/s with understanding of what makes people vulnerable

***Relationships***

- h) Ability to work independently or collaboratively as part of a small team to achieve positive outcomes
- i) Ability to work non-confrontationally, yet reason and argue assertively on important issues on behalf of people with disability.

***Extent of authority***

- j) Ability to work with supervision and within organisational policy
- k) Ability to exercise initiative and judgment within the scope of the role.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

### **ESSENTIAL**

1. Commitment to social justice principles including the promotion and protection of the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.
2. Senior law student, or experience in office administration in a legal environment.
3. Experience in legal practice.
4. Demonstrated attention to detail and highly developed organisational skills to maintain records within a resource-poor community based service.
5. Excellent interpersonal & verbal communication skills including the ability to communicate sensitively with clients and other people from diverse backgrounds.
6. Excellent written skills, including ability to convey information in simple English.
7. Computer competency.

### **DESIRABLE**

9. Knowledge of QAI processes, experience at a community legal centre and/or CLASS.
10. Experience of working with people with mental health impairments or disability.
11. Good knowledge of the welfare and/or disability sector/s with understanding of what makes people vulnerable
12. Knowledge of the *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) and related legislation.

Effective as at 20/12/17