



## Adelaide People First

### Values Statement

**Our Values statement together with our Vision statement provides a strong foundation for the activities concerned with the purpose and direction of Adelaide People First. All our planning and related decisions should be consistent with our values and vision statements.**

#### **At Adelaide People First we believe.....**

As human beings, we have more in common with each another than our differences. We share our humanity and our citizenship of the human race. A key human need we all share is our need for healthy relationships. We also remain connected to our voice and authority in our own lives. We hold ownership of our lives. We need our voice and authority in our lives respected.

We all need to live our lives free from abuse, neglect, violence, discrimination and exploitation.

Everyone needs a home and family in the community. We all belong in a safe home with family who love and are care about us. We all need to choose where and with whom we live. In healthy relationships we feel safe, respected and valued and learn, grow and develop to our full potential.

In relationships, we learn who we are; about our place in the world and, gain a sense of belonging and self worth. In the diversity of human relationships, we are free to explore and express our freedom, personality and sexuality. We have families of our own and participate in our community to make it a better place to live. Through our leadership, passion, vision, skills, knowledge and deep, heart understanding, we add to human diversity and make the world a richer place. This shows our deep social connection with each other.

We all need to have enough money, food, clothes, quality affordable housing, inclusive education, accessible affordable health services and access to community facilities to live a typical, valued, ordinary, good life. We all need to be included in and enjoy the sporting, cultural and spiritual life of society.

We all need meaningful, valued work which challenges us, builds our skills and knowledge and meets our social and economic needs. Our work also needs to build our self worth and make society a more inclusive place to live. We all need to be paid a full award wage with full award conditions for our work. We all need to have healthy and safe work places.

We all need an inclusive education. An inclusive education is where we develop academically, socially and culturally in the life of community. An inclusive education enables us to get work, where we can earn enough money to enjoy the good things in life. This includes:

- a safe home of our own
- good health
- cultural and sporting activities
- healthy relationships with family and friends
- active, valued involvement in social justice and advocacy movements

We all need adequate and appropriate support to live in the community as independently as possible. We need an affordable, accessible, efficient public transport system for all. We all need to express our spirituality in a way which makes sense to us and meets our spiritual, relationship and emotional needs.

Our society is made richer when diversity is celebrated and we all make a valued contribution. It is vital that we all contribute to the social, economic and political life of the community. We all need to take up our right to vote. When we vote we fulfil a valued role in deciding who represents us and makes decisions which affect us. Voting is part of our citizenship of our country. If we need someone to support us to vote, we should have the support we need in a way which best meets our needs.

We all have the human right to stand for state or federal parliament, without any discrimination. Standing for political office is one way we make a contribution to social and political change. We all have a valued role in decision-making processes which affect us. If we need support to take up our valued role in the process, we should receive it.

We all need to have freedoms of speech and association.. This means we are free to be a member of an advocacy, social justice or political group or movement. We need to have our freedoms protected and defended. When we speak out against social injustice and discrimination with the purpose of affecting positive social change, we influence society's attitudes and behaviours. This action also shows our capacity for leadership, vision and compassion. We make the world we live in a richer place.

The purpose of the law is to protect our human rights. The law often fails to protect our human rights. All people need to know where to go if/when the law fails to protect our rights. We need fair, equal, affordable and accessible access to representation if and when we need it. We all need information and support so we can have our human rights and needs protected and defended.

Given that society has not yet achieved these goals, it is vital that social and political change occur. We should strive to address the rejection, isolation, segregation, devaluing, life-wasting and death making currently present in the lives of people with disabilities. Adelaide People First knows that this happens in our society from our lived experience and the lived experience of other people with disability.

Our society values youth, wealth, intelligence, physical prowess and beauty. Our society decides worthiness on the human characteristics we are deemed to have. One's value or worthiness is decided on issues of gender, age, race, disability, sexuality, one's level of education and how much money one earns, and religion.

As a society we must have a policy of valued, typical, ordinary lives for ALL. Society includes individuals, groups, organisations and all governments and parliamentarians. We have individual and collective responsibility for achieving the social and political change required.

We need to understand what institutional practice, is, if we are to break down the walls of oppression. Adelaide People First strongly agrees with and supports the definition of an 'institution' used by the Canadian De-institutionalisation Task Force. Their definition of an institution is:

***“An institution is any place in which people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability, are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise, control over their lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size. An institution is not just a place, it's the way people think.”*** [www.institutionwatch.ca](http://www.institutionwatch.ca)

This definition speaks strongly to the thinking and practices of institutionalisation. Through our advocacy action we will strive to break down the walls of such thinking and practices. We do not accept any form of an institution, not even in disguise.

Adelaide People First also know that people with disabilities are to this day are still not afforded appropriate nor adequate support to live typical, ordinary, valued lives in the community. We strongly believe a typical, ordinary, valued life best meets the needs of everyone and reduces the risk to abuse, neglect, discrimination, exploitation and oppression.

People who have high levels of competence have a moral responsibility to do all it takes to enable those with less competencies to share in the richness of life, Society should be structured to reflect relationships which are mutual, cooperative, understanding interdependent and share power thus modelling how people should relate to one another in the wider society. Individuals, society and governments should actively embrace practices that enable people with disability to live, typical, valued, ordinary lives and share in the richness of community life.

It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that people who are most in need of strong, effective, values-based, principled, independent advocacy receive it. There needs to be a combination of funded and voluntary advocacy to meet the needs of people who are most in need of advocacy. . While there has been some improvement in the lives of some of us living with disability, there are still people with disability being discriminated against and institutionalised. People who continue to be institutionalised need access to strong values- driven, principled, independent advocacy with vision and purpose.

Adelaide People First will advocate strongly, passionately and wisely on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities who are the least powerful. We will advocate for social, political and economic change in the lives of people with lived experience of or labeled with intellectual disabilities. The focus of our advocacy action will be systems and community focused.

We will conduct our advocacy action in a way that is mindful not to add to the discrimination, abuse, neglect, exploitation and oppression experienced by people with lived experience of or labeled with intellectual disability, who are the least powerful. Adelaide People First will reflect on the deeper issues which effect people with lived experience of or labeled with intellectual disabilities, to ensure that we consider the big picture and how the individual parts of the picture affect each other. We will go beyond human rights and take what is honestly truly believed to be best as well as what Australian society needs to look like into account before taking action.

Advocacy is a social justice movement, not a service. For this reason Adelaide People First understands the critical need for advocacy to be and remain independent from service provision. Our definition of independent advocacy is:

**“To establish independence, an organisation or group needs to have advocacy as its core activity and not to be a provider of any services, especially the following: employment, accommodation support, personal care support, independent living support, respite, vocational training, brokerage, mediation, case management.**

**Advocacy for people with disabilities must be conducted by organisations or groups which are able to demonstrate independence from all actual, potential or perceived conflicting interests. Independence cannot be indicated by the separation of services from advocacy within an organisation or group.”**

Adelaide People First will adopt a Social Advocacy Framework for our People First Group. This means we will have a strong foundation which includes clearly stated values, vision, definition and principles of advocacy. Our Plain English definition of Social Advocacy is taken from Wolf Wolfensberger.

Our plain English definition is as follows:

**Social Advocacy is:**

**Active.....speaking, acting, writing with minimum conflict of interest for what is truly and honestly believed to be best for a person or group in order to promote, protect and defend the welfare of, and seek justice for either the individual or group being advocated for, in a way which strives to be strong and powerful and which might be, or actually is costly to the advocate, this means the advocate shares in the lived experience of the least powerful person or group ” (Silvana Gant)**

Adelaide People First’s principles of advocacy are:

- 1. Advocacy is always loyal to and stands up for the least powerful person/group**
- 2. Advocacy addresses real human needs of the person or group**
- 3. Advocacy is motivated by what is truly and honestly believed to be best for the person or group and “bends over backwards”**
- 4. Advocacy strives for minimum conflict of interest**
- 5. Advocacy is as powerful as possible**
- 6. Advocacy can be costly to the advocate, this means advocacy shares in the lived experience of the least powerful person or group**
- 7. Advocacy has honesty, dignity and staying power**

Adelaide People First, WE are stronger when we work together. Adelaide People First will strive to be a People First group networking well- in solidarity with our allies in the People First, disability advocacy and social justice movements with whom we share values, vision and understanding of advocacy.

Through all our decisions and activities, Adelaide People First will promote, advocate and defend an Australian society which celebrates diversity, acceptance, compassion, justice, fairness, equality and respect for the human dignity of ALL, in this, our Australian Society.