

Consultation with people with lived experience of impaired decision-making ability – honorarium payments

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Introduction

The Public Advocate is an independent statutory position whose role is to undertake systemic advocacy on behalf of adults with impaired decision-making ability.

More specifically, the functions of the Public Advocate are to:

- Promote and protect the rights of adults with impaired capacity (the adults) for a matter;
- Promote the protection of the adults from neglect, exploitation or abuse;
- Encourage the development of programs to help the adults to reach the greatest practicable degree of autonomy;
- Promote the provision of services and facilities for the adults; and
- Monitor and review the delivery of services and facilities to the adults.

One of the key functions associated with the Public Advocate's role is the preparation of systemic advocacy reports. These reports seek to make positive changes for adults with impaired decision-making ability, responding to issues and barriers that keep occurring for many individuals with impaired decision-making ability during their day-to-day lives.

Examples of systemic advocacy reports that the Public Advocate has prepared for the Queensland government include:

- *Supporting parents with cognitive disability – the need for reform, 2025.*
- *'Safe, secure and affordable'? The need for an inquiry into supported accommodation in Queensland, 2023.*
- *Adult safeguarding in Queensland, Volume 2: Reform recommendations, 2022.*
- *Preserving the financial futures of vulnerable Queenslanders: A review of the Public Trustee fees, charges and practices, 2021.*

When undertaking the research and consultation associated with the preparation of systemic advocacy reports, it is critical that the Public Advocate is informed by the lived experiences of adults with impaired decision-making ability.

This involvement is consistent with the values and remit of the Public Advocate and in line with state and Australian commitments and guidelines associated with research and the design and delivery of services and policies that involve and affect people with disability.

'Nothing about us without us', the slogan adopted by the global disability rights movement and used by many disability sector organisations and advocates across Australia is particularly relevant in this context, emphasising the centrality of people with disability to decisions, policies and initiatives that affect their lives.¹

This policy and procedure provide a framework to guide the involvement, and more specifically the honorarium, paid to adults with impaired decision-making ability when contributing to systemic advocacy projects completed by the Public Advocate.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all systemic advocacy projects completed by the Public Advocate that involve direct consultation with adults with impaired decision-making ability.

The policy and procedure does **not** apply if the Public Advocate decides to procure the services of an organisation to professionally recruit participants with impaired decision-making ability for the purposes of consultation for the systemic advocacy project.

In these circumstances, general procurement policies and procedures employed by the Department of Justice (DoJ) will apply to the process. The honorarium paid to research participants will be one factor considered as a component of the organisation's quote for professional services.

Queensland legislation

- *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*
- *Disability Services Act 2006*

Process

Systemic advocacy projects completed by the Public Advocate may involve adults with impaired decision-making ability:

- As subject matter experts – who play a significant role in the conduct of the project and the development of a systemic advocacy report.
- As individual participants – who are invited and attend a structured interview with a member of staff at the Office of the Public Advocate.
- As participants at a group meeting – who are invited and attend a focus group or roundtable meeting organised by the Office of the Public Advocate.

Subject matter experts

Should a subject matter expert be required for the purposes of the systemic advocacy project, general procurement policies and procedures employed by DoJ will apply to the process.

¹ Disabled World, 'Nothing About Us, Without Us; The Evolution and Impact of Participatory Disability Rights', *Disabled World (DW)*, 19 August 2025, revised 20 August 2025, <www.disabled-world.com/disability/publications/journals/nauwu.php>.

Individual interview and group meeting participants

When the Public Advocate wishes to engage people with lived experience in a systemic advocacy project, two options are available;

- Engaging a specialist firm (eg. QDeNgage) to organise a group meeting, according to a pre-determined specification provided by the Public Advocate to meet the needs of the project. When this method is employed, the specialist firm is responsible for recruiting and incentivising the participation of people with lived experience (ie. Payments are included in the total price for the project quoted).
- Approaching a disability sector organisation (eg. Queenslanders with Disability Network, Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia, Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion) to request that they source people, from their networks and client databases, with lived experience relevant to the systemic advocacy project being undertaken.
 - Should this type of approach be taken, the Public Advocate will then be responsible for providing all participants in a group meeting/structured interview with an honorarium commensurate with the time taken by the person to participate in the group or discussion and, if applicable, this would also cover the cost of travelling to the venue at which the group meeting or individual discussion is held.
 - Should the person recruited for a group meeting or discussion be employed by an organisation where this type of consultation is considered a legitimate part of their role (excepting in a volunteer capacity) then they will be excluded from the receipt of an honorarium for taking part.

Honorarium payments

The nature of the involvement of people with lived experience will be determined by the Public Advocate at the scoping phase of a systemic advocacy project.

Should the involvement of individuals with lived experience in the project be required, a specification will be developed to guide interaction with appropriate agencies or organisations (decided by the Public Advocate).

The specification will include:

- An outline of the project, its objectives and key expected outputs.
- A definition of what 'lived experience' means in the context of the project (eg. an adult with impaired decision-making ability who has interacted with the criminal justice system in Queensland).
- The nature of involvement from people with lived experience required, including when and where the interview or group discussion will take place and the time commitment involved (including pre and post interview or group involvement if required).

The honorarium paid to adults with lived experience who are consulted as a component of a systemic advocacy project will depend on the time commitment involved.

The general schedule of honorarium payments (based on industry standards) is provided in the table below.

Travel expenses

Given that adults with impaired decision-making ability may also require specialised transport services to attend a face-to-face structured interview or group discussion, an additional payment will be made to subsidise transport costs associated with attendance (including parking costs).

As included in the table below, the honorarium fee for payments associated with face-to-face structured interviews or group discussions will include an additional \$50 payment to subsidise these expenses.

Length of time required	Honorarium (participation)	Honorarium (travel expenses)
90 minutes (focus group participant – online)	\$80.00	N/A
90 minutes (focus group participant – face to face)	\$100.00	\$50.00
60 minutes (structured interview participant – online)	\$100.00	N/A
60 minutes (structured interview participant – face to face)	\$120.00	\$50.00
Pre and post involvement (eg. completion of a survey, reading material etc)	\$50.00	N/A

NB: structured interviews attract a higher honorarium due to the intensive nature of the interaction involved (one on one rather than in a group environment)

Form of payment

Each adult who attends and participates in a structured interview or focus group associated with a systemic advocacy project will receive an honorarium payment based on the schedule above by way of an EFT payment using DoJ's SAP system.

Arrangements for this payment, including the collection of the banking details of the participant, will be made prior to the conduct of the focus group or interview, facilitated by the use of a template-based form for the recording of details.

Once the focus group or interview and any other post group or interview activities are completed, arrangements will be made for the payment to be processed as soon as possible (next day) credited to the participant's account.

Optional, last resort form of payment

Should the participant feel uncomfortable providing their banking details to staff from the Public Advocate (potentially due to previous traumatic experiences that may have led to a lack of trust in government generally, and government processes in particular) or in circumstances where they do not hold an operational bank account for deposits, a last resort option will be to provide the honorarium payment in the form of a prepaid gift card.

The gift card will be generic in nature (ie, will not be restricted to a certain store or brand) and provided to participants following the completion of the interview or group discussion and any post involvement activities that are required.

The Public Advocate will be responsible for any activation fees associated with the gift card so that it is ready for use (subject to vendor specifications and use by dates) once received by the participant.

To ensure appropriate reporting requirements associated with the issue of a gift card, the date of purchase and receipt for the card will be recorded, along with an acknowledgement form that will be signed by the participant when receiving the gift card.

Gifts and Benefits Policy

Honorarium payments, following advice from the Department of Justice's Strategy and Governance Unit, are not considered a gift or benefit as each will be provided as an honorarium payment in return for services provided (in the form of the provision of experiential expertise, and the time taken to do this).

Reporting requirements

The Public Advocate will, by way of a briefing note, inform the Deputy Director General – Corporate Services of any lived experience consultation to be undertaken as a component of a systemic advocacy project.

Should a gift card be provided to a participant (as above) all records will be retained detailing the purchase and receipt of the card, suitable for financial audit purposes.

The Public Advocate is not a statutory body under the *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982* or the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*. However, in the interests of accountability and transparency, the amount spent on lived experience consultation payments will be reported each year in the Public Advocate's Annual Report.

Protection of personal information

Personal contact information associated with participants completing lived experience interviews and focus groups may be retained by the Public Advocate in the interests of a complete record keeping process.

However, in accordance with the Public Advocate's legislative remit (included in Section 209A of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*), any systemic advocacy report prepared by the Public Advocate for the Minister must not include 'confidential information that is likely to result in the identification of a member of the public, or an adult with impaired capacity to whom the information relates'.

Should a data breach involving any personal information held by the Public Advocate occur, this will be addressed following the process outlined in DoJ's *Data Breach Notification Policy and Procedure, Chapter 3A Information Privacy Act 2009, 2025*.

Should those people about whom personal information is held by the Public Advocate wish to access this information, they can do so, either informally under DoJ's *Administrative Release Policy*, or formally, under the *Right to Information Act 2009*.

Accountabilities

The Public Advocate is accountable for this policy and procedure, including the approval of participant payments, under financial delegated authority (DAL 2).

Public Advocate staff are accountable for applying this policy and procedure when involved in systemic advocacy projects that require consultation with people with lived experience.

Staff are expected to be aware of the procedure requirements and protocols to ensure a responsive and consistent approach to this area.

Contact

Manager, Office of the Public Advocate

Approval

Name	Date
John Chesterman, Public Advocate	1 June 2026

Review

A review of this policy and procedure is to be conducted 5 years from date of approval or since last 5-year review.

A mandatory review will coincide with the appointment of a new Public Advocate or any changes in legislation related to this procedure.

Revision History

The following outlines the high-level changes that have been made to each version of this document and who made them.

Revision Date	Summary of Amendments	Prepared by	Version
1 June 2026	Initial version	Tracey Martell, Manager OPA	1.0

Definitions

Disability

As defined in section 11 of the *Disability Services Act 2006*, for the purposes of this procedure:

- (1) A disability is a person's condition that—
- (a) is attributable to—
 - (i) an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment; or
 - (ii) a combination of impairments mentioned in subparagraph (i); and
 - (b) results in—
 - (i) a substantial reduction of the person's capacity for communication, social interaction, learning, mobility or self-care or management; and
 - (ii) the person needing support.
- (2) For subsection (1), the impairment may result from an acquired brain injury.
- (3) The disability must be permanent or likely to be permanent.
- (4) The disability may be, but need not be, of a chronic episodic nature.

DoJ

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Impaired decision-making capacity

Under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*, **impaired capacity** for a person for a matter means the person is not capable of -

- (a) understanding the nature and effect of decisions about the matter; and
- (b) freely and voluntarily making decisions about the matter; and
- (c) communicating the decisions in some way.

The person must be an adult (18 years old and over).
