

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability Inc.
Parent based systems advocacy

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24th June, 2009

The Hon Anna Bligh MP
Premier of Queensland
PO Box 15185
CITY EAST Q 4002

Dear Ms Bligh

Re: Office of the Public Advocate

I am writing on behalf our concerned membership of people with disability, parents with sons and daughters with disability and our associate membership in regards to the government's intention to remove the independent status of the Queensland Office of the Public Advocate.

As you are aware the Public Advocate has been an independent statutory officer whose position was established under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*. As an independent statutory authority, the position has been rightly made independent of government.

Our members believe that the Office of the Public Advocate is an essential piece of the minimal infrastructure in place to defend and promote the human rights of an extremely vulnerable group of Queenslanders, namely those with a decision-making disability.

We do not support Recommendation 133 of the Weller Report to abolish the independence of the Office of the Public Advocate. We support the recommendation to wait for the findings of the Law Reform Commission before the government makes any decision. Queenslanders with impaired decision making and their families rely on the independence of the Public Advocate to be the watchdog for the decisions and actions of government agencies as they impact on the lives of people with disability. Placing the Public Advocate within the Office of the Adult Guardian raises serious issues of Conflict of Interest, particularly where there is the need to investigate systemic failures within the Office of the Adult Guardian.

The rationale that we should follow practice in other states is not sustainable.

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Queensland's legislation, and the establishment of an independent position of Public Advocate, has been highly regarded by people with disability and their allies in other areas of Australia. Dismantling the independence of this important protective mechanism for people with impaired capacity increases the vulnerability of this group of Queenslanders.

We call on you to act to maintain this important protection for Queensland's most vulnerable people and keep the Public Advocate independent.

Yours sincerely



Dr Lisa Bridle.

Cc The Hon Cameron Dick, Attorney-General & Minister for Industrial Relations
The Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk, Minister for Disability Services & Multicultural Affairs.