

# Self-Advocacy Kit

Book 1



Self-Advocacy and Human Rights



Advocacy for Inclusion

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to our Self-Advocacy Kit. We have created it for anyone who wants to discover and build those powerful personal skills that are about:

- knowing yourself, your rights, and what matters to you;
- discovering your most powerful way to communicate that to others;
- knowing how to take care of yourself when making changes is challenging.

We hope this kit will be helpful for many people. This kit can be used by a person reading it on their own, in a group where ideas can be discussed, or in a workshop.

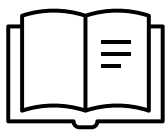
We know some of the ideas in this kit can be challenging. Speaking up for ourselves isn't always easy. Sometimes we can have fears or concerns about what might happen when we speak up. We encourage readers to talk about these ideas with a trusted friend or support person and, if possible, first try out these ideas in situations that feel safe and supportive.

### **Who is this kit for?**

In our organisation we meet many people with disabilities. A lot of those people are dealing with things that are not OK in their lives. Some find it hard to speak-up about what is not OK. We know there can be a lot of reasons why it can be hard. But we also know that people can build skills, become more confident, and discover how they can help themselves make a difference in their own lives.

This kit is for people who want to start discovering and building those skills.

## How do I use this kit?



This kit can be printed out and used like a workbook. This can be helpful if you decide to use the book in a group discussion or workshop.



The kit can also be used online. If you use it online then you will find that you can click on links and view videos that provide some extra information about the topics. If you are running a group discussion or workshop you might have the kit available on a laptop, as well as printed copies, so the group can view the videos.

The kit can be useful in different ways:

- If you are just interested in one topic, for example human rights, then you can just go straight to that section of the kit.
- If you want to discover and build a range of skills then you might choose to work through the whole of the kit.

## What is 'Know Your Stuff'?



Throughout this kit, you will find "Know Your Stuff". This is where we have included internet links to extra resources related to each chapter. These include links to videos and reading material, as well as to some interactive activities for you to try. There is also a full list of all internet links and internet addresses in the back section of this kit.

## What is 'Over to you'?

### Over to you

The 'over to you' sections of the kit are where you get the chance to think about and reflect on your own personal experiences of self-advocacy.

You can type or write your thoughts in the spaces provided.



Use the spaces to write your thoughts.

### Example:



## Where can I get more copies?

- Our website Advocacy for Inclusion at [www.advocacyforinclusion.org](http://www.advocacyforinclusion.org)
- Phone us on (02) 6257 4005
- Email [info@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:info@advocacyforinclusion.org)

## Feedback

We welcome any feedback about this kit. We would like to hear from you if you find anything unhelpful, or hard to understand in the kit, or if you have ideas about how the kit could be better. We would also like to hear if there are things in the kit that you find helpful. Giving feedback can be a helpful experience of using your self-advocacy skills. You can contact us by:

- phoning us on (02) 6257 4005, or
- emailing [info@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:info@advocacyforinclusion.org)

## Supported Communications Options

If you have a hearing and/or speech impairment, you can contact the [National Relay Service \(NRS\)](#) by calling **1800 555 677** then ask for the number for the relevant service

If you need an interpreter, you can call the [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS National\)](#) by calling **13 14 50**. TIS National will put you through to the relevant service

## 2. What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-advocacy means speaking up for our rights, our needs and the things that are important to us.



We self-advocate in many ways and we do it for many reasons.

We self-advocate when we make everyday choices for ourselves, like what clothes we want to wear and what food we want to eat.

We also self-advocate when we:

- let other people know what is OK and not OK in our life;
- ask for a change in a situation when something is not OK for us;
- talk about our skills and what we can offer in a job interview;
- identify a problem in our life, work out who can help us fix the problem, and then communicate with that person to get it solved;
- talk to people in power, like politicians, about what matters to us and the changes that we want to see made in policies and laws.

We self-advocate

- to make our lives better;
- to remind people that we have rights and that we should be treated fairly and with the same respect as everyone else;
- to have our say in the decision-making in our families, communities, and in the world of politics.

We self-advocate because we all share the same human rights.

We will explore human rights in this section.

**i Know your stuff**

Watch this video on self-advocacy and your rights to learn more about what self-advocacy means.



[Self Advocacy 1 Human Rights - YouTube](#)




**Over to you**

**What does self-advocacy mean to me?**

Can you think of a time when you advocated for yourself? It might have been speaking up about a problem or letting people know what you have to offer in doing a job or being included in a group.



 Use the spaces to write your thoughts.

**Think: How did I advocate for myself?**





**Think: Did I find it easy or hard to do? Why?**



**Think: What did I learn?**



## Conclusion

Nobody is 100% perfect when it comes to self-advocating. There is always room for learning new skills and becoming stronger and more confident with the skills we already have.

We can learn from those times when we speak up and see change happen. We can also learn from those times when things do not work out the way we planned.

One of the most powerful questions that is always helpful to come back to, no matter what happens, is **"What can I learn from what happened?"**

### 3. Knowing Your Rights

#### What are human rights about in general?

Human rights are the building blocks that make sure our lives are full, free, and valued by others.



We all have the same human rights. We all should be treated equally and respectfully.

Our human rights are explained in two important documents:



- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**
- **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

Our human rights have an important place in many of our Australian state, territory, and federal laws. This means disrespecting human rights is not just wrong, it might also have serious legal consequences.

#### What are some of the areas that are covered by human rights?

Our human rights include:

- the right to be treated equally
- the right to choose where to live
- the right to an education
- the right to vote and run for government
- the right to marry and have a family
- the right to work and choose where to work.



## Know your Stuff

You can find the full list of human rights in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** here:



[Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)



[Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Plain English](#)

## The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)



CONVENTION  
ON THE RIGHTS  
OF PERSONS  
WITH DISABILITIES

The Convention of the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD) is an agreement that protects the human rights of people with disabilities.

The CRPD does not give people with disabilities new rights. However, it says that people cannot be treated differently or unfairly because of their disability.

Countries that sign and ratify the convention must make sure that people with disabilities get their human rights.

Australia signed the CRPD in 2007 and approved it in 2008.

You can find more information about the **CRPD** and **human rights** in these resources:



[The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)



[Where do Human Rights come from?](#)

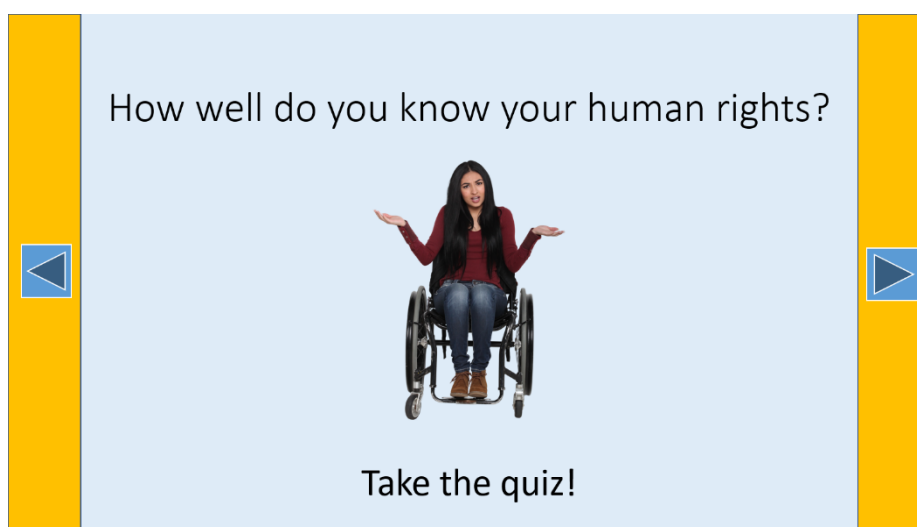


[Convention of the Rights of Persons with a Disability \(CRPD\) – Plain English](#)

Test your knowledge of human rights in this quiz:



[Quiz – How well do you know your Human Rights?](#)



How well do you know your human rights?

Take the quiz!

## What does it look like when human rights are not respected?



It is a sad truth that in our history, and in our world today, people's human rights are not always respected as fully as they should be.

We know that human rights are not being respected when:

- people are discriminated against because they have a disability or because of their sexuality, cultural background, or beliefs;
- people's freedom to make their own choices about their lives are over-ruled;
- people are blocked from exercising their rights as a citizen.

Our human rights must be respected.

Not just some of our human rights, but **all** of our human rights.



## Is it discrimination or not discrimination?

Disability discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly or less favourably than other people because of their disability.

Discrimination can happen in many ways. It can be

- **direct** – when a person is treated differently and in a way that causes them disadvantage. For example, a person not being allowed into a restaurant because they are in a wheelchair;
- **indirect** – when policies, laws and practices that treat everybody the same puts people with disability at a disadvantage. For example, a local council designs a playground that children with disability can't get in to.

## Did you know?

Disability discrimination is the largest category of discrimination reported to the Human Rights Commission in Australia.

**44%** of discrimination cases were related to disability in 2018-19.<sup>1</sup>



1. Source: [People with disability in Australia, Disability discrimination - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/health/disability-disability-discrimination)

**Over to you**

Look at the following examples and decide for yourself if they are examples of discrimination. Write your thoughts in the spaces below.

- 1) A person with a disability goes to a job interview. They have the best qualifications and experience for the job and it is clear they can do the job well. They are not offered the job because they have a disability.



**Is this discrimination?**



- 2) A person with a disability goes to a job interview. There are a number of candidates for the job and one of the other candidates has more qualifications and experience than anyone else. The person with disability is not offered the job.



**Is this discrimination?**



- 3) A person is given notice to vacate their rental accommodation because the owner believes the renter's mental health condition might mean the renter is going to damage the property. There is no history of the renter causing any damage to rental properties.



**Is this discrimination?**



- 4) A person is given notice to vacate their rental accommodation because the owner wants to sell the house. The notice complies with everything specified in the local law.

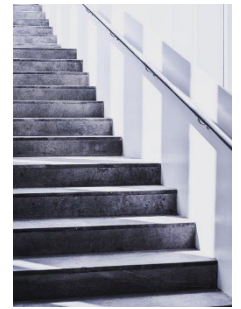


**Is this discrimination?**





5) A government community consultation meeting is organised at a meeting room in a building that is not fully accessible.



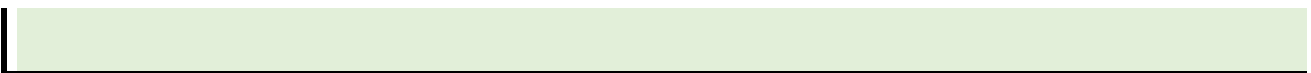
**Is this discrimination?**



6) A legal requirement is in place that specifies visitors to aged care facilities must wear masks in order to protect residents from a current pandemic. A visitor is denied entry because they refuse to wear a mask.

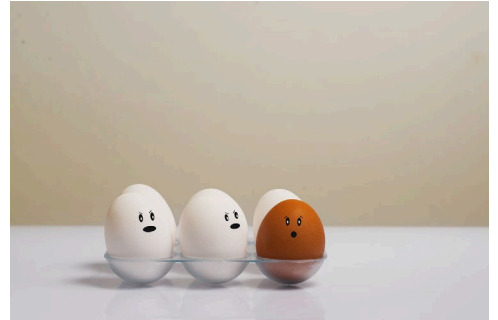


**Is this discrimination?**



Discrimination can happen in many ways:

- Sometimes discrimination can happen because a person has a prejudice against people with disability. It's a sad fact that there are people in our world who simply dislike other people who they see as different to them.
- Sometimes discrimination can happen because a person does not understand disability very well. It's helpful when people like that are open to learn more from people with disability or through doing disability awareness training.



Even situations that are not direct discrimination – like the person with disability not getting the job because they have fewer qualifications and experience than another candidate – can point to a bigger story of discrimination.

The bad effects of discrimination can build up over a lifetime. Did discrimination play a part in the person not gaining the qualification or experience that would have made a difference in a job interview?

Sometimes self-advocacy can be about sharing our stories with others. Many people's stories, connected together, can tell the bigger story of how our community is failing to respect human rights. Telling that bigger story can play an important role in changing things for the better.



## 4. Connecting Human Rights and Self-Advocacy



The things that we self-advocate about are quite often connected to our human rights.

It is important to look for that connection when we feel we are not being treated fairly, or given a fair go, or when our choices and decisions are being ignored.

Even when we are self-advocating it can be helpful and important to talk to people who have the skills to help us -

- understand our problem
- see how it might be connected to our human rights and the law
- help us work out a plan to sort the problem out.

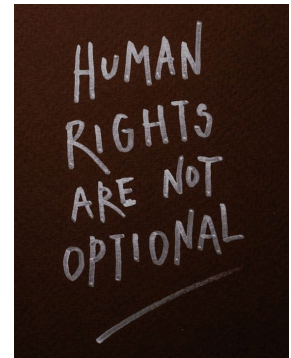
If we are a person with disability, then a local disability advocacy organisation might help. There are also Human Rights Commission offices around Australia who specialize in promoting and protecting human rights.



## Why is it important to know our human rights?

If we know our human rights

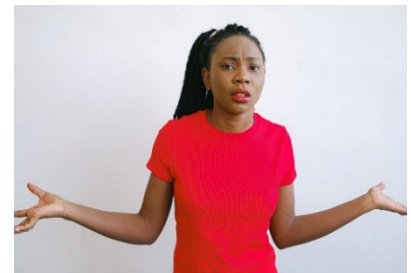
- it gives us a clear idea of how people should respect each other whether it is in the community in general, at school, or in workplaces;
- it helps us understand our own rights and our responsibilities in protecting the rights of other people;
- it gives us a strong reference when we are talking about what is not OK in our lives and why it is not OK;
- it reminds us that we should be treated in a fair and equal way the same as anyone else.



## Why might it be hard to protect our rights?

It can be hard to protect our rights if –

- we don't know what our rights are;
- we feel like people may not listen to us or believe us;
- we are worried that making a complaint about something may mean that people might treat us worse than before;
- we believe that some things are too hard to change.



Sometimes we are faced with people who do not understand human rights.

Their behaviour, and the way they relate, can be strongly influenced by their biases and prejudices.

This can be very difficult anytime. It can be most difficult when those people are in positions of power and they are making decisions that have an impact on us.

There can be understandable pain and trauma when our rights are not respected or when they are ignored.

It is often helpful to get help from others when we are faced with this. Sometimes our most powerful act of self-advocacy is asking for help when we need it.

Organisations that can help with this include:-



- disability advocacy organisations (like Advocacy for Inclusion)



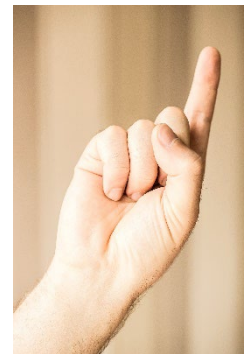
- the local office of the Human Rights Commission



- community legal centres.

### What are some things that you can do to help you protect your rights?<sup>1</sup>

- Know what your rights are
- Know who to talk to
- Know where to get support if you need it
- Know how to be assertive (instead of passive or aggressive) when speaking up for yourself.



We will look at what being assertive means in more in **Book 2**.

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<sup>1</sup> (Adapted from 'The right to have a say: A kit of tools for consumer participation': Redfern Legal Centre, 1992)

**Over to you**

**Reflecting on Human Rights**

Use the spaces to write your thoughts.

**Think: Have I noticed times when people have not respected the rights of other people?**



**Think: What is it like when rights are not respected?**



**Think: What are some helpful things that people can do to take care of themselves when they are faced with disrespect and discrimination?**



## More resources on Self-advocacy and Human Rights

- **Australian Human Rights Commission**  
[Know your rights: Disability discrimination | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission (Britain)**  
[What are human rights? | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)
- **Understanding Intellectual Disability and Health**  
[www.intellectualdisability.info/changing-values/self-advocacy](http://www.intellectualdisability.info/changing-values/self-advocacy)