



# Advocacy- Get help speaking up

## Fact Sheet

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There are times when people living with multiple sclerosis or their carers need someone to speak up on their behalf. This is called advocacy.

An advocate works to ensure the rights of people are upheld by supporting people to make decisions affecting their lives.

An advocate can be a family member, friend, a team member from the MS organisation or a person from an external organisation. We encourage you to use an advocate when you need help negotiating with us, or the service system. We can help you access an advocate if you need one, but we won't be advocates in relation to our own organisation.

### **What kinds of advocacy can we provide?**

Our MS team members provide support and services to people living with multiple sclerosis in ACT, NSW, VIC and Tasmania. As part of these services, we can help you:

- understand and exercise your rights
- change the situation you're in
- gain control over a situation
- get better access to services
- negotiate the health and disability systems

### **What kinds of advocacy can MS Australia provide?**

MS Australia is the national organisation responsible for advocacy and communication.

MS Australia runs the **National Advocates Program** which aims to bring about big, systemic changes that will benefit all people living with multiple sclerosis. They do this by encouraging changes to the law, government and service provider policies and community attitudes.

MS Australia also collaborates with the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation, Consumers Health Forum, Australian Council of Social Services, National Disability Services and the Neurological Alliance Australia to advance the interests of people affected by multiple sclerosis.

### **What kinds of advocacy do other, non-MS organisations provide?**

There are a number of other organisations that provide advocacy.

The main differences between their service and ours are:

- they are independent — so they can help provide advocacy in relation to our organisation if required
- they often have specialty focus areas — such as aged care or ethnic communities
- they don't focus on helping you negotiate the health and disability systems, but more your rights in doing so

We can assist you in finding the right advocacy supports within your local area – please ask for more information if you need this. There are times when people living with multiple sclerosis or their carers need someone to speak up on their behalf. This is called advocacy.



# Feedback, Complaints and Compliments

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MS is committed to providing high quality services to people with MS and other progressive neurological conditions and to their families and carers.

MS has a commitment to seek and use all types of feedback to improve the services we deliver. MS believes that complaints, general feedback and compliments can be used to improve what we do for the benefit of all our customers.

There are **7 core principles of feedback management at MS:**

1. Provision of feedback to MS is encouraged
2. Respect, privacy and confidentiality is maintained
3. A timely response is provided (within 2 business days)
4. Complaints are adequately resolved, serious or unresolved complaints are escalated
5. Documentation of complaints and their resolution is maintained
6. Trends in feedback are monitored and reviewed
7. Staff skills and knowledge in management of feedback is maintained

Complaints, general feedback and compliments can be lodged in any format that meets your needs, such as in person, via a phone-call, via the MS website, via email or in writing. These can be directed to an individual staff member or to our Feedback Officer using contact details below:

**Phone:** **MS CONNECT: 1800 042 138**

**Email:** [feedback@ms.org.au](mailto:feedback@ms.org.au)

**Post:** **MS Feedback Officer**

The Nerve Centre  
Multiple Sclerosis Ltd  
54 Railway Rd  
Blackburn 3130

If you are not satisfied with the way a complaint has been handled by the MS team you have the right to escalate this to the relevant state-based Ombudsman office:

### **VIC**

Disability Services Commissioner  
Level 30, 570 Bourke St  
Melbourne 3000  
Phone: 1800 677 342  
Email: [complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au)  
Web: [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au)

### **ACT**

ACT Ombudsman  
Level 5, 14 Childers St  
Canberra 2601  
Phone: 1300 362 072  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)  
[ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au)  
Web: [www.ombudsman.act.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au)

### **NSW**

NSW Ombudsman  
Level 24, 580 George St  
Sydney 2000  
Phone: 1800 451 524  
Email: [nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au)  
Web: [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)

### **TAS**

TAS Ombudsman  
99 Bathurst St  
Hobart 7000  
Phone: 1800 001 170  
Email:  
Web: [www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au)

### **Complaints Resolution Referral Service (Australia wide)**

Phone: 1800 880 052 (free call from land lines)  
Web: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints>



# Rights and Responsibilities

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### **As a customer of MS, you have a right to:**

- Have access to quality services which meet your needs and our available resources
- Work in partnership with us to develop, implement and monitor a service that is tailored to meet your needs
- Be treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of service provision
- Be protected and live in an environment which is free from harm and safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Decide whether or not you take part in research or training activities
- Have access to a qualified interpreter if you need one
- Have access to an advocate if you wish to use one
- Have all information we collect about you stored securely and confidentially
- Make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the services you receive without fear of retribution or loss of access to services

### **As a customer of MS, you also have the responsibility to:**

- Treat staff, volunteers and other customers with respect and dignity
- Not threaten or be aggressive in our environment
- Be responsible for the decision you make when working in partnership with us
- Provide accurate information about services and treatments you have received from other providers
- Notify us of any changes of your situation, including change of contact details
- Notify us if you are unable to attend an appointment
- Acknowledge that we have a duty of care to all our customers. This may mean we are unable to provide a service if we consider it to be inappropriate or it creates an unacceptable risk to any party.