

## **Senses Foundation's position regarding client and family representation on its Board**

Senses Foundation has no representative groups or individuals on its Board.

The Senses Foundation constitution is clear that the Board acts as a whole and in the best interests of the organisation at all times. It represents the interests of the membership and does not singularly or as a group, act in the interests of any individual other than as defined in the objects and the principles which are as follows.

### Statement of Governing Principles contained within the Constitution

- Senses Foundation believes that each person with a disability is unique and a person of value and is entitled to the same rights and privileges as other Australian citizens. Senses Foundation is committed to ensuring that all clients have the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and the opportunity to participate in activities that enable them to achieve valued roles in the community. They may have needs for additional support and education to enable them to fully exercise those rights and responsibilities. In this regard, Senses Foundation agrees with the principles and objectives of the Disability Services Act 1986.
- Senses Foundation acknowledges the right of each person with a disability to be a valued member of the community and will encourage its clients to be active participants in their community, to access community facilities and contribute to community life.
- Senses Foundation is committed to ensuring all clients retain maximum control over their own lives by having primary involvement in, and influence over, decisions that affect them.
- Senses Foundation is committed to ensuring all clients receive services that are designed and delivered around their individual circumstances, needs and preferences by employees who are properly trained and supervised.
- Senses Foundation is committed to excellence, to continuous improvement, to the use of contemporary practises and to innovation in its governance and management of the organisation as a whole and in the provision of services to its clients.

### Objects of Senses Foundation contained within the Constitution are to

- enable people with disabilities to meet their needs and aspirations and to achieve and maintain a valued quality of life as part of an accepting community and society;
- provide or arrange a range of services and other facilities and opportunities, and support and enhance the requirements of people with disabilities;
- collect, collate and disseminate information to further and better promote the Objects;
- undertake and foster research so as to improve the services and facilities provided by the Senses Foundation to people with disabilities;
- advocate within the community to encourage an inclusive and accepting community and society for people with disabilities; and
- develop, construct and otherwise maintain appropriate facilities for people with disabilities and the staff and volunteers who are employed by Senses Foundation.

Senses Foundation considers that it would not be acting in accordance with its constitution nor with good governance, to seek “representation” on its Board. This does not mean that clients or families should not be elected to the Board or disqualified in any way from election to the Board but that they would only be elected based on their capacity to perform the role of Board Member, not because they represent or are members of a particular constituency that would suggest they have interests wider than those of Senses Foundation for which they are acting as a Board Member.

The Senses Foundation Board encourages all families and clients to become members of Senses Foundation. To this end it regularly distributes letters to clients and their families encouraging them to become members.

The Senses Foundation Board also encourages any member who is a client or a family member and who has the skills to carry out their duties as a Board member under the constitution, to seek nomination to the Board. This has occurred on many occasions in the past.

### Input from Clients and Families

The Senses Foundation Board considers that it has other methods in place for maintaining the extremely important function of feedback from service recipients and families. These include

- The establishment of an organisational culture which encourages open, transparent and effective communication. It has a Strategic Objective to this end.
- A complaints procedure including accepting anonymous complaints and including a feedback mechanism on the website. All complaints are reported to the Board at every Board meeting.
- Feedback mechanisms are described to every client and family member as part of the orientation to every service.
- In the Accommodation service, “house” meetings are held every 4/6 weeks. Family meetings are also held annually.
- In the Therapy service, a family survey is distributed annually.

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