GdA celebrates its 22nd AGM at Ararat Town Hall

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 8th of October in the newly refurbished foyer of the Ararat Town Hall with about 40 people attending. Treasurer Steven Harmer was awarded a 10-year certificate of appreciation for his role as a Board Member. Nan & Ed McAdie were presented a posthumous award for their daughter Rhonda Clarke who was a great community and disability rights campaigner in both Ararat and Ballarat.

Guest Speaker Bernadette Pasco (Financial & Consumer Rights Council Project Coordinator) gave an excellent and informative overview of the causes of financial distress, what financial hardship looks like, aged care services and accommodation costs and the rising incidence of elder abuse.

Ararat Rural City Mayor Cr Gwenda Allgood and Councillor Fay Hull also attended. The seven Board Members were all returned for another 12-month term.

Chairperson: Jenni Starick
Vice-Chairperson: Kay Timmins
Secretary: Julie McDougall
Treasurer: Steven Harmer
Ordinary members: Norm McMurray, Mark Thompson, Bernadette O’Shannessy
Youth consultants: Emma Blackie, Jae Pinniger

To read the Annual Report please go to our website www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au or phone us on 1800 552 272 to obtain a copy.
Wimmera social services warn that regional Victorians fall through the gaps
(Story and photo from Ararat Advertiser, Nov 7, 2018)
Wimmera health and social service organisations issued a joint statement to candidates ahead of the Victorian election calling for greater equity for rural communities. It warned that people in rural and remote parts of the Wimmera are being denied the services they need, and that long term reform strategies are needed to address systemic inequities.
The statement said a series of reforms to the health sector, including the national roll out of Primary Health Networks in 2015, have led to increased staff turnover, decreased stability, and a need to compete against other health services for funding.
Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership Executive Officer Emily Anderson said the outcome of this was compromised patient care in rural and regional areas.
“Our rural health workforce is suffering. Gaps in specialist expertise, inadequate resources and training opportunities and considerable staff turnover are the result of massive system changes over a consolidated period of time,” she said.
Ongoing shortages of qualified specialists and medical practitioners were a key election topic, with both major parties pledging to make changes to the current system.
Grampians Community Health Chief Executive Greg Little said political leaders need to realise that rural and remote is not the same as regional, and that funding needs to be targeted appropriately. “People in small rural communities have the same right to access services as those in metropolitan or regional communities," he said.
Grampians Disability Advocacy’s EO Deb Verdon said people with a disability are falling through the cracks.
"In terms of Centrelink and the NDIS reports from GPs are no longer good enough. Support agencies demand a report from a specialist, but where are the specialists to be found?” she said.

People with a disability learn about their right to vote
Grampians Advocacy joined forces with Pinnacle Inc. and the Victorian Electoral Commission to bring a workshop to Ararat about voting rights and how to participate in an election.
The training was held at Pinnacle in View Point St on September 20. It included participants, Sister Rocks Self Advocacy members and PinnPower consumer group members.
The Victorian Electoral Commission explained the laws around voting, and the fact that anyone over the age of 18 is entitled to vote unless there is a specific reason why they should be excluded.
The VEC representative explained the voting procedure, and the amount of help that is available at the polling booth for people with a disability.

Utility Grant Schemes available from Dept Health & Human Services
This grant scheme is to provide help for people that are in a financial crisis.

To qualify you need to have one of these:
- Pensioner card
- Health care card
- Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card

The amount of the grant is based on the amount the customer owes at the time of the application and is capped at six months’ worth of utility to a maximum of $650.

For more information, call 1800 658 521 or National Relay Service on 13 36 77. Or email: concessions@dhhs.vic.gov.au
Or visit the website: www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/concessions-and-benefits
TRAVABILITY OPENS DOORS
Travability is a full service travel agency for people of all abilities. It aims to make the world accessible to all. The company has a worldwide network of disability specialist suppliers. Services include:
- Itinerary planning
- Flight and hotel bookings
- Attractions
- Hire cars and vans (some with modifications)
- Hire equipment
- Cruising holidays
- Yacht charters and fully escorted group tours
Destinations include USA, Canada, Mexico, UK, Spain, Israel/Jordan, Africa, Botswana, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and New Zealand.
Activities include mountain biking, snow skiing, diving, climbing, safaris, tall ship sailing, adventure touring.
For more information go to www.travability.travel or call 61 4 1769 0533 or email travel@travability.travel

DO YOU DISAGREE WITH AN NDIA DECISION?
NDIS participants or those wishing to become participants may not always agree with a decision made about them by the National Disability Insurance Agency.

If this is the case for you there are things you can do to make things better.

Grampians Advocacy has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to help people with a disability to have their voice heard when a disagreement arises.

Contact GdA to find out how our NDIS Appeals Support Officers can help you to apply for an internal review or to take your matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Call Grampians Advocacy on 1800 552 272 for more information or to get help with the review process.

Experience the great outdoors in the TrailRider Wheelchair
The TrailRider Wheelchair is funded by the Victorian Government Transport Connections Program, Ballarat City Rural Access Program, Parks Victoria and Ballarat Visitor Information Centre.
The special chair improves access to recreation and social opportunities.
The all-terrain wheelchair is also available at the Grampians, Cape Conran, Point Nepean, the Moorabool Shire, Daylesford, the Surf Coast Shire and the Alpine National Park.
Phone 1800 44 66 33 to make a booking or visit www.visitballarat.com.au

Left: Ashley Heenan tries out the TrailRider Wheelchair with the help of two “sherpas” in the Ballarat district.

GdA NDIS Appeals Support Officer Bernadette Duane (above left) attended a special NDIS and mental health conference to gain further insights into how people with a psycho-social disability can access the new scheme.

Bern met many key players in the mental health arena and took the opportunity to introduce herself to them. This included former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard (above right), who is now the Chairperson of Beyond Blue.

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SOME WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED AT GRAMPIANS ADVOCACY

At GdA we value your opinion
Tell us what you think:
Please write in and let us know what you think of the newsletter and its content.

News articles:
Do you have any community news or an article you might like us to include in our newsletter?
Please note - all news, articles, stories need to be of benefit to people with a disability.

Policies:
Let us know if you would like to attend a forum to review our policies.
Nominate for the Board of Governance at the AGM in October.

Don't forget - the GdA newsletter can come to you in large print, audio format or via email.
If this is your preference, please contact us on:
Free Call: 1800 552 272
Fax: 5352 2733

We would appreciate any comments on the service we provide.
Post your comments to: GdA, PO Box 112, Ararat 3377, or email them to us at admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au

www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au