

GdA is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services under the National Disability Advocacy Program.
GdA is funded by the Victorian Government - Department of Health and Human Services.

Ballarat the venue for Annual General Meeting

GdA's 2016-17 AGM was held in the Trench Room at Ballarat City Council. It was attended by more than 40 people, including Federal Member for Ballarat Catherine King. Guest speaker Frank Hall-Bentick delivered a presentation highlighting his involvement with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Frank has been a long term crusader and champion of human rights, especially for those with a disability. He has steadily campaigned for global measures to uphold the rights of people with a disability. During the meeting GdA's first life membership was awarded to Ballarat member Kath Woods. Elected Board members are Jenni Starick (Chair), Kay Timmins (Vice-chair), Julie McDougall (Secretary), Steven Harmer (Treasurer). Norm McMurray, Mark Thompson and Bernadette O'Shannessy make up the remainder of the Board. There is one vacancy remaining.

If you would like a copy of the Annual Report 16/17, call 1800 552 272 and leave your postal or email details. The Annual Report is also available on our website www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au

Grampians disAbility Advocacy



LEFT: Grampians Advocacy Executive Officer Debbie Verdon (left) and Wimmera advocate Trudy Joyce get the word out that “Advocacy Matters” at the AGM. The #AdvocacyMatters campaign is an initiative of Disability Advocacy Network Australia devised to highlight the importance of advocacy in defending the human rights of people with a disability throughout Australia.



LEFT: Guest speaker Frank Hall-Bentick and Hanka Maslo show their support for the #AdvocacyMatters campaign. Frank's AGM presentation highlighted the decades of segregation, isolation and institutionalization that resulted in the need for a treaty to protect and promote the rights of people with a disability. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on December 13, 2006.



Kath Woods first recipient of GdA Life Membership

Ballarat resident Kath Woods (pictured right) was awarded a life membership of Grampians disAbility Advocacy at the Annual General Meeting on October 9. In announcing the award GdA Executive Officer Debbie Verdon described Kath's tireless advocacy for her children and all people with a disability since she moved to Ballarat with her husband John and two sons in 1984. She has served on the parent committees at Yooralla and Ballarat Special School, and was a foundation member of the Ballarat Disability Action Group and the community access awards scheme.



EDITORIAL

#Advocacy Matters Campaign

The future funding of independent advocacy agencies is uncertain in many Australian states, particularly Queensland and New South Wales. Victorian advocacy agencies have been assured of funding until mid-2019, but there are no guarantees beyond that time.

Disability Advocacy Network Australia has responded to the situation by promoting the #AdvocacyMatters campaign, designed to emphasise the importance of independent disability advocacy to people with a disability.

While some may have assumed the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme would provide for the needs of all people with a disability this will clearly not be the case. At full rollout the Scheme is expected to provide support for 460,000 Australians, leaving millions of people with a disability who will not be accepted as participants. This group will remain in need of other supports, including advocacy.

In September DANA published a cost benefit analysis, led by Professor Anne Daly from the Discipline of Economics, University of Canberra which details the value of independent advocacy and shows that for every dollar invested by governments in advocacy, there is a saving of \$3.50. This fact is one that the advocacy sector is keen to make known amongst political parties, community members and people with disability.

It makes good economic sense to keep independent advocacy going.

Please support #AdvocacyMatters campaign.

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 matters 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.**

Grampians disAbility Advocacy

Board of Governance & Staff
wish all our members, their families and
friends a Happy & Safe Xmas and a very
Happy New Year

Please note that all our offices will be closed
between Xmas and the New Year

For urgent advocacy advice
Contact the Office of the Public Advocate on
1300 309 337



BREAKING NEWS (NOV 2017)

NEW NDIS PATHWAY RELEASED TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANT AND PROVIDER EXPERIENCE

The new pathway will include:

- A consistent point of contact, who plays a key role in empowering participants to achieve outcomes.
- Planning undertaken with a skilled Local Area Coordinator or NDIA planner who will spend time understanding the unique needs of each participant
- A stronger focus on the broader system of supports for people with disability, including other government services such as health, education and transport, to promote greater inclusion and a sense of community for people with disability
- Communication which emphasises the objectives of the NDIS, with a clear focus on outcomes and goals during planning discussions
- Information that is clear, consistent and available in accessible formats, such as plain English and braille
- An improved NDIS portal and tools, combined with more straightforward processes that will reduce the administrative cost for providers

NDIA Chief Executive Officer, Robert De Luca, said the new pathway was the result of a collaborative review the NDIA undertook in response to feedback from participants and providers that their experience was not meeting expected standards.

For more info, go to the NDIS website or Every Australian Counts website

From ABC website

by Khama Reid

Holiday in your wheelchair? It's not that easy to book online when hotels say one thing but mean another

Pick a hotel, select your dates and click a button. Booking a holiday online has never been easier - unless you use a wheelchair. Just ask Patricia Foley, who lives in the beachside Adelaide suburb of Semaphore. While she refuses to let her disability stand in the way of holidaying with her husband and two children, she is acutely aware of how tough it can be for wheelchair-bound people. "The average person may take an hour to find their hotel, it may take me a week - if not longer," Ms Foley said. She said online booking sites often listed hotels as having disability access without providing the option to select a wheelchair-friendly room. Ms Foley said she had learned to call ahead and check exactly what was available. She also said many hotels promoted as wheelchair-accessible only provided flat showers with no shower-chairs or rails. She said her family always had to book more expensive rooms or pairs of rooms, as wheelchair-friendly family rooms were rare. "They don't think people in a wheelchair have families," she said. "Truly, it doesn't cost the company anything extra because they can still hire that room out to able-bodied people."

**The bottom line is that personal requirements & specifications need to be made perfectly clear, because it is never clear-cut. Ask the exact questions to get the right answers.*



"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING"

New 23-year-old Senator Jordon John-Steele (pictured left) has already overcome several barriers; he is not only the youngest person to ever serve in the Senate, he is also the first person with a disability to sit in the Upper House. But the obstacles he confronted on day one in the building were prosaic and unyielding. Staff in Parliament have been scrambling to install ramps throughout the building to ease the new senator's passage. They are also making some major adjustments to his office (story courtesy of ABC online).

Photo: Stephen Dziedzic ABC

DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS?

In order to reduce our postage costs, and to minimize our environmental footprint, GdA would prefer to email future newsletters.

If you have an email address please let us know by writing to us at our new email address admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au with "member email" in the subject line.

Thanks from GdA

If you would like to include an item of interest in our newsletter, contact the Ararat Office on 1800 552 272 or the email address above.

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

asas@netconnect.com.au



www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au



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