



NEWSLETTER

June 2019

"Our voice, Our choice"



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

FIGHT FOR BETTER ACCESS AT BALLARAT RAILWAY STATION Win for GdA at VCAT – access improvements on the way at Station



Grampians Advocacy has had a significant win at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. GdA made an application to the VCAT Human Rights List a year ago in an effort to force Victorian authorities to improve access for people with a disability at the Ballarat Railway Station. The five complainants to the action were Shirley Mitchell, Mark Thompson, Judi Smith, Gary Fitzgerald and Joyce Watson. All five have a sight or mobility impairment. Seven issues of concern were raised, including access between the two platforms, accessible toilet facilities, heavy doors, the layout of the kiosk, appropriate lighting and signage for the sight impaired, platform height for boarding and exiting the carriage with a mobility aid, and accessible parking. The Department of Transport commissioned an access audit regarding the seven issues and a consultation was carried out with the input of the complainants and other members of the public. The matter was settled at a compulsory case conference at VCAT and the Department of Transport committed to a raft of improvements, some of which will be made in the next three to six months. Lifts and an overpass to allow access for all between platforms will need to be included in the 2020 budget process and be signed off by Cabinet.

HORSHAM DISABILITY EXPO

VALID, Wimmera Parent Support Network and the VALID Wimmera Peer Action Group held a Successful Expo in April with 50 exhibitors, covering a diverse range of topics for people with a disability and their carers.

GdA was represented by EO Debbie Verdon and Wimmera advocates Trudy Joyce And Kim Wiese. GdA Board member Bernadette O'Shannessy made a presentation about her NDIS journey as a woman with a disability. Bernie's guest speaker role was due to her position as an equality advocate with Women's Health Grampians.

Bernie and her story were also featured in the Wimmera Mail Times in March. (see inside for the article)



GdA Executive Officer Debbie Verdon (left) and advocate Kim Wiese enjoyed meeting people and talking about GdA services at the Expo.

Shaping the future of disability policy for 2020 and beyond - Public Survey

The National Disability Strategy **2010-2020** is about creating a more inclusive society that enables Australians with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. It is also the main way Australia implements the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Australia, making sure people with disability can participate in all areas of Australian life. The Strategy is a shared commitment by all governments to work together to improve the lives of Australians with disability by guiding governments and other organisations to build the wellbeing of people with disability and their carers. In addition to the public survey, there is a wider consultation process that includes:

- face-face community workshops
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community consultation
- online forums.

The survey is also available in Easy Read version and in Auslan. If you are having trouble accessing or completing the survey, call 1800 334 505 or email disabilityreform@dss.gov.au. If you are a TTY user call 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 334 505.

Do you think someone with an NDIS plan is being ripped off?

The NDIA is serious about preventing, detecting and dealing with fraud against the Agency and the NDIS participants.

If you suspect someone may be committing fraud you should report it.

The best way to report suspected fraud is to call the Fraud Reporting Hotline on 1800 650 717.

Suspicious behaviour can be reported anonymously and your rights are protected by law.

DHHS Utility Relief Grant Scheme

Victorians experiencing unexpected hardship can apply to the Utility Relief Grant Scheme to help pay their mains electricity, gas and water bills.

Find out if you can apply.

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/utility-relief-grant-scheme>

or call 1800 658 521

Equality for All Advocates featuring Bernie O'Shannessy



WIMMERA women will lead the way in creating a more equitable community through a new project. Women's Health Grampians has launched "Equality for All", an initiative to strengthen the organisation's work in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Having lived with a disability almost her entire life, Horsham's Bernie O'Shannessy knows all too well the challenges people with disabilities face. She said attitudes towards people living with a disability had changed over time for the better, but there was still work to do. She said women living with disabilities faced a wide-facet of challenges, especially living in regional areas. There is a lack of choice because there are limited services," she said. Women's Health Grampians recruited and trained 11 women as project advocates, who will use their experiences of discrimination to inspire change. There are four other Horsham Equality for All advocates. All the advocates are women who have more than one identity or issue; and may have a disability, or be a migrant or Indigenous, or a member of the LGBTQI community. Bernie and the other advocates speak at community events about their experiences. They recently had their first speaking engagement at a Communities of Respect and Equality Alliance meeting in Horsham. "We basically talk about our lived experiences, an issue that has affected us as a woman and how we can change attitudes around those certain issues," she said. (extract from the Wimmera Mail Times 28/3/2019)

Public Transport Victoria Travel Concessions

You can travel with an Access Travel Pass if you have a permanent physical disability, cognitive condition or mental illness that prevents you from using myki.

Eligibility

To be eligible for an Access Travel Pass you must:

- have a significant permanent physical disability, cognitive condition or mental illness
- be unable to consistently touch on or off due to your condition
- be able to travel independently on public transport, without assistance from a carer or companion
- be a Victorian resident.

**If you're not eligible for the Access Travel Pass, you may be eligible for a:

- Companion Card
- Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass
- Multi-Purpose Taxi Program membership.

**If you're a Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment recipient, you may be eligible for free and discounted travel.

This includes a 50 per cent discount on a full fare / free travel on Saturdays and Sundays in two consecutive zones / two free off-peak travel vouchers each year.

Eligibility

To be eligible, you must:

- hold a Pensioner Concession Card coded DSP or CAR
- be aged under 60 years
- be a Victorian resident.

Contact PTV on **1800 800 007** for more information



Cerebral Palsy Group

Cerebral Palsy Group is an online resource for anyone who has been affected by cerebral palsy, birth injuries, or brain injuries. Our team was created so we can provide answers and all types of assistance needed to help improve the quality of life for loved ones and family members with cerebral palsy. Go to www.cerebralpalsygroup.com

PARKS VICTORIA VISITS SISTER ROCKS SELF ADVOCACY GROUP



(from left) Jess, Kay, Hannah from Parks Victoria, Grant & Brooke

Hannah Auld was the guest speaker at the May Sister Rocks meeting in Stawell. Hannah gave a broad overview of activities Parks Victoria hosts in the Grampians. Hannah talked about all abilities walks, holiday programs for children and welcomed anyone to attend these organized groups. Also, Parks Victoria now offers the all-terrain Trailrider to enable access to walks for people that have limited mobility. Parks Victoria has trained volunteers available to assist on the walks. For more information phone 5361 4000

TRAILRIDER



The Parks Victoria Trailrider is available at various locations including the Grampians, Hepburn, Moorabool and the Loddon regions, as well as other places around Victoria. It's a free service and provides volunteer Sherpas to assist.

Phone 8247 3251 to check availability and make a booking.

Parks Victoria has also published an Accessible Walking Guide to 25 tracks in the Grampians National Park.

It contains 25 walking tracks in and around the Grampians that can be accessed by people with limited mobility. These tracks offer a wide range of experiences and challenges. Call 5361 4000 or download the guide from the Parks Victoria website.

DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS?

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

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

If you would like to include an item of interest in our newsletter, contact the Ararat Office.

If you are interested in any of our “**policies**” or the **Annual Report**, you can view these online at www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au Follow the “**downloads**” link

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

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