



# GdA Policies for Advocacy Clients

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<b>3.1 SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY</b>			
<b>Policy number</b>	3.1	<b>Version</b>	2
<b>Drafted by</b>	D Verdon	<b>Reviewed</b>	20/3/2017
<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	Dec 2018

**Systemic disability advocacy is defined as action taken to influence or produce changes to systems or communities in an effort to ensure fair treatment, social justice and enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities.**

**Systemic changes are commonly sought in regard to legislation, the policies and practices of Government or non-Government agencies, community attitudes, and access to premises, facilities and services.**

**The purpose of this policy is to guide GdA in the prioritisation of systemic issues and the conduct of systemic advocacy.**

**GdA recognises that:**

- **systemic advocacy can potentially benefit large numbers of people with disabilities and lead to long-term positive change and community development.**
- **there are many systemic issues at the local, regional, state and national level (and some are very complex)**
- **due to limited resources, GdA has limited capacity to conduct systemic advocacy**
- **a set of guidelines is required to help decide which issues GdA should advocate on**
- **identification of issues to work on must take into account the concerns expressed by people with disabilities.**

### **Prioritising Systemic Issues**

**Systemic issues may be brought to GdA's attention by a consumer, consumer group, another agency or a community member, or be recommended by an advocate in response to information received. There are many systemic issues that could be addressed at any one time. In deciding which issues to pursue, the GdA Executive Officer and Board will be guided by the following:**

1. **1.An assessment of the significance of the issue to people with a disability.**

2. **2.An assessment of the number of people with disabilities affected or potentially affected by the issue.**
3. **3.An assessment as to whether the issue falls within GdA's expertise and responsibility. Priority will normally be given to regional concerns.**
4. **An assessment as to whether there are other organisations that might have an interest or responsibility to get involved in or address the issue.**
5. **The level of work that is likely to be involved in endeavouring to address the issue and whether GdA has the capacity to conduct the work required.**

### **Groundwork for Systemic Advocacy**

Once it is determined that a particular systemic issue is appropriate for GdA to undertake, the GdA Executive Officer and the Board will decide:

1. **Whether GdA should take systemic advocacy action solely or in conjunction with other groups or organisations.**
2. **The priority that shall be given to the systemic issue and when work should commence.**
3. **The extent of preliminary research that may be required.**
4. **Whether GdA should engage in broader consultation in relation to the issue and, if so which people, groups or organisations should be consulted and the method of consultation.**
5. **Which personnel within GdA shall be involved in working on the issue and the roles and tasks they shall have. The EO will oversee the work of those involved.**

### **Conducting Systemic Advocacy**

Having determined the nature of GdA's involvement and that of any other parties, an Action Plan will be developed and implemented. This will involve:

- **Defining specific objectives to be achieved.**
- **Agreeing upon strategies to be employed and the time line for the campaign.**
- **Identifying resources that are required.**
- **Monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan against agreed objectives and reviewing the strategy and objectives if necessary.**
- **Evaluating the advocacy actions - what worked and what didn't, what remains to be done and what lessons can be learned.**



## 3.2 ACHIEVING INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

<b>Policy number</b>	3.2	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Drafted by</b>	D Verdon	<b>Reviewed</b>	16/2/2015
<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	Feb 2017

At GdA each person with a disability receives advocacy that is designed to meet their individual needs and interests. Some GdA clients or prospective clients have a disability that affects their capacity to behave appropriately all the time, or communicate effectively with GdA staff. GdA is mindful of the nature of its service, and that our staff need to cater for the individual needs and abilities of our clients.

Our work is guided by the following set of guidelines:

- Client needs are responded to on an individual basis, taking into account the age, sex, cultural, linguistic and family and religious background of the person.
- Clients are, wherever possible, actively involved in all aspects of the advocacy process, in an effort to facilitate the development of self-advocacy skills. In particular, decisions regarding action to be taken are made by the client and the advocate and the client jointly formulate an individual advocacy plan. The advocate will assist the client to identify the issue at the heart of their issue or grievance.
- Regular reviews of the appropriateness and efficacy of advocacy actions on particular issues are undertaken with the client. At this point alterations to the individual advocacy plan can be made.
- In meeting the needs of a person with a disability, GdA avoids wherever possible any conflict of interest, real or perceived, and deals with such conflict transparently (see GdA Conflict of Interest policies for staff and board).

The advocate consults regularly with individuals or groups/representatives regarding ongoing and future actions, and regularly reviews the outcomes of previously authorised actions. No action may be undertaken on a specific issue without the informed consent and approval of the individual or the majority of the particular group that initiated the action.

The advocate keeps accurate file notes and ensures they are up to date.

Information for clients is available in Easy English, large print, and audio versions. Every effort will be made to meet individual needs for other means of communications such as Auslan or CALD interpreting.

**Each person accessing advocacy from GdA is given the opportunity to involve a support person of their choice in the process, e.g. family member, support worker.**

**The advocate maintains a working knowledge of appropriate legislation, publications and services with the intent of passing on that information to persons with a disability in appropriate formats and through self-advocacy training.**

**The advocate can make referrals to other community facilities and services and other specialised agencies and/or services where and when appropriate.**



### 3.3 MANAGING UNREASONABLE CONDUCT

<b>Policy number</b>	3.3	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Drafted by</b>	D Verdon	<b>Reviewed</b>	9/5/2016
<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	March 2018

Unreasonable conduct is characterised by behaviours that go beyond what's considered acceptable, even when taking into account the effect on a person of a disability and/or situational stresses related to advocacy issues.<sup>1</sup>

There is a need to balance the rights of the client to a service with the rights of staff to safety and respect, and the rights of other clients to GdA's time and resources. GdA ensures the health and safety of their staff and complies with Occupational Health and Safety and Duty Of Care obligations as employers.

The following is a set of ground rules that GdA advocates and clients endorse as part of their signed consent when they commence working together.

#### Ground rules for working with a GdA advocate: Roles and Responsibilities

As a responsible employer GdA requires that clients show respect for and cooperate with the advocates as a prerequisite to further contact and communication.

Clients need to:-

1. Clearly identify the advocacy issue concerning them, or seek help to do this if needed
2. Give GdA as much accurate information as possible about the issue of concern, be honest, and act in good faith in dealing with GdA staff and refrain from any act or omission which may place GdA staff at risk.
3. Discuss options and a plan of action with the advocate
4. Treat the advocacy staff with courtesy and respect (including being punctual)

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<sup>1</sup> Based on definition in Managing unreasonable complainant conduct practice manual, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, NSW Ombudsman, June 2009, p.1

**If the client does not meet their responsibilities GdA may limit the amount of contact with the client, or refer them to another organisation for assistance.**

**Staff also have responsibilities in regard to their interaction with their clients.**

**Staff need to:-**

- 1. Present with a calm demeanour**
- 2. Show respect to their client**
- 3. Demonstrate empathy and understanding**
- 4. Remain professional at all times (including being punctual)**

**If GdA does not meet its responsibilities the client can make a complaint to the Executive Officer of GdA, or the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service.**

*Any abuse, harassment, or threats to the safety or welfare of staff at GdA will result in immediate discontinuation of service and all contact with the client will stop.*





### 3.4 ACCESSING ADVOCACY

Policy number	3.4	Version	2
Drafted by	D Verdon	Reviewed by Board	10/4/2017
Responsible persons	Executive Officer	Next review date	Feb 2019

**GdA advocacy services are free of charge and are open to people with any type of disability, regardless of religion, culture, age, race, sex, living arrangements and sexuality.**

**Any person with a disability, or involved in the care of a person with a disability, who lives in one of the 11 Local Government Areas serviced by Grampians disAbility Advocacy, can ask for assistance with addressing their advocacy issue. Typical advocacy issues may include, but are not limited to, matters concerning housing, service providers, finances, independent living support and discrimination.**

**Access to the service by a person with a disability is provided on a non-discriminatory basis. People from any culturally or linguistically diverse community can request support. Interpreters are sourced as needed. No particular disability is given priority of access over any other. However, GdA receives many requests for assistance and may not always be able to respond to these immediately.**

**Grampians disAbility Advocacy makes every effort to respond to all appropriate requests for assistance. However, it also reserves the right to refuse a request for advocacy if:-**

- **the request would be more appropriately handled by another agency**
- **it is not possible to take proper instructions from the proposed client or those associated with their care, despite the use of the appropriate interpreters and/or communication aids**
- **the request is characterised by a hostile attitude to the organisation**
- **the requested action will bring Grampians disAbility Advocacy into disrepute**

**Where advocacy is not appropriate for the client making the request discussion will be held with the client about another more suitable organisation that may be able to address their needs.**

#### **ACCESSING GdA's SERVICE**

**People are eligible for GdA's assistance if they:**

- (i) have a physical, intellectual, sensory, psychiatric, neurological, or learning disability, or an acquired brain injury**
- (ii) are the carer or families of the above named group; and**
- (iii) need advocacy assistance to identify resources and entitlements, express their views, or resolve a problem.**

**GdA is a multi-site organisation. It does not have a central intake and referral process. Potential clients are invited to make contact with the GdA office closest to them.**

**Each office services one or more different local government areas as follows:-**

- **Ararat: Rural City of Ararat (03 5352 2722)**
- **Stawell: Northern Grampians Shire (03 5358 2614)**
- **Horsham: Horsham Rural City, Yarriambiack Shire, West Wimmera Shire, Hindmarsh Shire (03 5381 2400)**
- **Ballarat: City of Ballarat (03 5333 7344)**
- **Daylesford: Hepburn and Moorabool Shire (03 5348 3350)**
- **Golden Plains Shire (1300 942 773)**

**GdA commits to responding to a person making an inquiry or seeking advocacy within three days of the initial contact or phone call, or within five days if the service is provided on a part-time basis.**

**Each client seeking advocacy assistance has access to the service on the basis of their relative need and GdA's available resources. Members of GdA do not have priority of access to the service.**

**All clients are given a copy of GdA's Information for Advocacy Clients booklet in a format that suits their needs (standard, CD, large print, Easy English).**

**Clients are made aware of the agency's complaints procedure.**

**Where GdA is able to provide advocacy support, consent forms, privacy and other guidelines are discussed and signed at the initial contact point or at the next appropriate contact.**

**A service will not be provided by GdA unless consent is obtained from the individual, guardian, or in cases of significant need (where the person is deemed unable to provide individual consent), a family member, a case manager or other appropriate person who is clearly acting in the interests of the client.**

### **PRIORITY OF ACCESS**

**Our advocates consider the following questions when responding to a request for advocacy:.**

- **Is it a disability related issue?**
- **Does the request lie within the capacity of the organisation's expertise? For example, legal advice cannot be provided by GdA.**
- **Can the desired outcome be achieved through individual advocacy procedures?**

**If the answers to all three questions are positive, GdA can provide assistance. If GdA is unable to assist advocates will explain the reasons for this and will provide information about other organisations which may be able to assist, or alternative pathways to resolving the issue or grievance.**

**For cases which pass this initial screening advocates look at how urgently help is needed.**

**Cases are prioritised according to 3 categories: very urgent, urgent, and important. GdA advocates respond to very urgent issues as soon as possible.**

**Whenever the demand for these subsidies, advocates take up cases from the urgent and important categories on the waiting list.**

**Very urgent applies to requests where the client's safety or overall quality of life is at serious risk if intervention doesn't immediately occur, e.g. if the client is facing homelessness, has essential care needs that aren't being met, is experiencing severe financial hardship or neglect or abuse of any kind.**

**Urgent applies to requests where the client has been deprived of their rights in an area of life, but is not at serious risk without immediate intervention, e.g. an underpayment in the workplace.**

**Important applies to requests where the client is concerned about a situation which has occurred in their life and has had a negative impact; advocacy support is required, but is not urgent, e.g. a complaint about a service provider.**

**If the request has been assessed as very urgent, and no advocate is available to respond to the request for advocacy, the client will be informed within two working days that his/her request for advocacy has been unsuccessful.**

**Wherever possible the client will be referred to another appropriate service. Grampians disAbility Advocacy will contact the appropriate service to ascertain whether the service can respond to the client's request for advocacy before referring the client to the service.**

**If a client needs assistance in more than one area of life, the issues are categorised separately and addressed according to the level of urgency.**

## **TERMINATION OF ADVOCACY**

**GdA's service will cease:**

- **At the client's request.**
- **When the advocacy issue is resolved and the desired outcome is achieved.**
- **When agreement is reached between GdA and the client that a positive outcome is not achievable and that no further steps can be taken.**
- **When the client decides not to continue or decides to pursue an alternative type of resolution or does not contact their advocate for 3 months.**
- **When the agency can no longer effectively assist the client. The agency will assist the client to pursue alternative supports if possible.**
- **If the client displays behaviour to staff that is threatening in nature and where all reasonable steps have been taken to reduce the effects of this behaviour, resulting in continuing unacceptable risk for the staff member (refer GdA Violence Policy and Managing Unreasonable Conduct Policy).**

**After termination of service, where it is practical to do so, clients will be invited to complete a consumer exit survey form. They will also be invited to become members of GdA.**

**On termination of service client files will be securely kept for a period of seven years. After this time records will be securely destroyed.**

**Clients whose cases have been closed are welcome to request a service at a time in the future should other issues arise that require advocacy support. Repeat clients have the same access to the service as any client and will be prioritised according to need and urgency.**

### **GRIEVANCE AND APPEALS PROCEDURES**

**If a client doesn't agree with decisions to terminate advocacy or to not provide advocacy, they may request an explanation from GdA's Executive Officer. If the client is not satisfied with the response from the Executive Officer, the client will be informed of the GdA Complaints and Disputes policy and the formal complaints process will begin.**



### 3.5 BEHAVIOURAL AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR CLIENTS

<b>Policy number</b>	3.5	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Drafted by</b>	D Verdon	<b>Reviewed</b>	9/5/2016
<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	May 2018

Some GdA clients or prospective clients have a disability that affects their capacity to behave appropriately all the time, or communicate effectively with GdA staff.

GdA is mindful of the nature of its service, and that its staff need to cater for the individual needs and abilities of its clientele.

Equally, clients and prospective clients are required, as far as possible, to interact with GdA staff in a respectful and courteous manner.

In order to establish a normal working relationship advocates are trained to establish ground rules with a client before beginning any advocacy action (see Managing Unreasonable Conduct Policy).

In some instances, it may be appropriate for the client to be involved in developing a behaviour and/or communication support plan with their advocate, with guidelines that can be adhered to by all parties. It should be noted this will only be effective if all parties enter into the process in good faith.

If a person's behaviour is affected by their intellectual disability or a psychosis then their advocate may request that a close relative, carer or case manager attend meetings with the client.

Advocacy staff will use all means at their disposal to communicate effectively with their clients. This includes using picture boards or interpreters where available. Advocates can seek assistance from Communication Aids Australia (PH 9555 8552) or Scope (PH 9843 2000) to establish communication techniques for their work with their clients.



## 3.6 DEALING WITH VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

Policy number	3.6	Version	2
Drafted by	D Verdon	Reviewed	6/6/2016
Responsible persons	Executive Officer	Next review date	June 2018

**Abuse, threats or violence are unacceptable towards GdA staff, as is any other behaviour inconsistent with showing respect for and upholding the dignity of any other individuals. This policy applies equally to GdA staff and clients.**

**GdA is committed to providing an environment that delivers safety and security to both workers and clients. We believe that all people with a disability have the right to seek our assistance, regardless of race, religion, sex or socio-economic status. Practices will reflect the flexibility and attitudes necessary to cater for people who have specific needs, disabilities and disadvantages. At all times the service will reflect the dignity and needs of clients.**

**However, there are times when GdA's clients as a result of the frustrating and stressful situations they find themselves in, may become angry and potentially violent. The following guidelines and practical procedures are aimed at ensuring the safety of staff, clients and the wider community.**

### **GUIDELINES**

**GdA understands and supports those people who suffer from substance abuse, physical or psychiatric triggers. However, ongoing hostile behaviour towards GdA staff by any client will result in the termination of advocacy services provided to them.**

**The GdA working environment reflects standards expected by law within the general community. (Occupational Health and Safety legislation at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)).**

**Illegal drug use will be prohibited on the premises.**

**Management will ensure staff have adequate educational opportunities to learn the skills necessary to implement this policy, and will undergo training in behavioural and communication support for clients.**

**The physical environment (within resource constraints) of the service will be organized in such a way as to minimize frustration and eliminate dangers.**

### **PROCEDURES FOR STAFF**

**When staff are working alone they are required to keep their door locked and check who is at the door before allowing them entry to the office.**

**When conducting client interviews:**

- **Where possible, sit between the client and the door.**

- Try to establish as quickly as possible what the client's problem is and what assistance can be offered.
- Call for assistance if you feel the need and it is available. If possible leave the interview to gather further information.
- Get out if seriously threatened, or ask the person to leave.
- If uncomfortable interviewing a client or feel threatened advise the supervising staff member straight away, if available.

**During client interactions:**

- Remember angry people usually react better to a calm, quiet but firm voice, than a loud one.
- Do not abuse, physically threaten or insult the client.
- Do not touch the client without permission.
- Do not make any sudden moves or gestures that may alarm or startle the client, unless you are getting away in a situation of threat.

**Telephone calls:**

- Common community standards of courtesy and respect are required in all telephone contact
- Abusive or hostile messages left on answering machines or sent via SMS or social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) are not acceptable and should not be responded to.
- Telephone calls that feature abuse, threats or profane language will not be tolerated. In the first instance, the caller will be warned that their communication is not acceptable and will be asked to desist, or the call will be terminated. If this does not eventuate the call will be politely terminated.

**If you experience face to face verbal abuse**

- The person will be asked to stop the abusive behaviour.
- If the behaviour continues the person should be asked to leave the building.
- If there is a refusal, advise that the behaviour will result in police contact.
- If they do not leave, call the police.

**If you experience a physical attack:**

- Call the police immediately
- As far as possible ensure the safety of others in the building, both service providers and clients.
- Do not confront or crowd the violent client person. Request that they leave the building straight away.
- Complete an Incident report as soon as practicable.

**If there is property damage**

- The person should be asked to leave straight away.
- Call the police and the EO.
- A police report is required for any insurance claim on damaged property.

**If a client self mutilates**

- Call the police, "Critical Assessment Team (CAT)" or ambulance, whichever is most appropriate.



### 3.7 DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE

Policy number	3.7	Version	1
Drafted by	D Verdon	Reviewed	8/5/2017
Responsible persons	Executive Officer	Next review date	Feb 2019

GdA is committed to giving people the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions in relation to the services they receive. The advocacy agency is guided by ethical considerations and takes reasonable care to avoid foreseeable risks, without unduly limiting the ability of each person with a disability to take responsibility for his or her own decisions. Advocates are careful to ensure their clients are aware of, and give consideration to, the likely consequences of their decisions as part of the planning process.

GdA promotes informed choice and decision making through:

- **Advocating for the participation of people with disabilities in community life, assisting its clients to clearly identify and communicate their wishes and needs.**
- **Supporting its clients to represent themselves as far as practicable.**
- **Encouraging clients to become members of GdA and nominate for the Board of Management.**
- **Ensuring that 50 percent of the GdA board of management are people with a lived experience of disability.**
- **Promoting the motto of the association in the public arena, which is “Our Voice, Our Choice”.**
- **Circulating amongst its members and other agencies the chairperson’s and other staff members’ reports from Annual General Meetings.**
- **Publishing a quarterly newsletter providing information about issues and services affecting people with a disability.**
- **Providing information on services and facilities in the community to enable its clients to make informed decisions.**
- **Acknowledging that adequate or reasonable instructions at times cannot be obtained directly from the client because of the client’s incapacity to make informed decisions; instructions may, in these circumstances, be obtained from a client’s parent, guardian or primary carer.** Advocates must be cautious when pursuing this course of action. The person with the disability remains the client at all times; advocates will consult the Office of the Public Advocate if in doubt about a person’s capacity.



- **Ensuring that verbal language is appropriate to the comprehension level of the client, i.e. where appropriate, simplified English is used. The use of jargon and acronyms are avoided. Role-plays or examples are used to help illustrate the point.**
- **Using visual cues or alternative communication devices where appropriate.**
- **Providing enough time for people to ask questions and clarify ideas.**
- **Inviting each person with a disability to involve a friend, family member, carer, interpreter or advocate in any discussion or presentation to assist comprehension.**
- **Ensuring information on GdA services is distributed widely in the community.**
- **Involving consumers in the annual review of the agency's operations, either through completion of a survey or attendance at a group interview.**
- **Acting upon the feedback received from the annual review, particularly suggestions for improving service delivery.**



### 3.8 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Policy number	3.8	Version	1
Drafted by	D Verdon	Reviewed	20/3/2017
Responsible persons	Executive Officer	Next review date	April 2018

The agency recognises and respects the right of all consumers to privacy, dignity and confidentiality. GdA's privacy commitment is discussed with each new client of the service at intake. Each client of the agency signs a privacy statement and consent forms regarding the sharing of information.

Clients are also advised of their right to pursue GdA's complaints procedure if they detect breaches of privacy or confidentiality in their dealings with the agency. If the matter remains unresolved an individual can lodge a formal complaint with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (Privacy Commissioner), ph. 1300 363 992.

Privacy principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 and the National Privacy Principles 2001 set the standards for the use and management of personal information collected by, or provided to, GdA for advocacy purposes as follows:

- Only information relevant to the effective resolution of the advocacy issue(s) is sought and collected by the service. All information is collected in a confidential manner, i.e. in private interviewing facilities where practicable. Attention is paid to the suitability of phone conversations with clients when there is more than one staff member in the general office area.
- The agency regards all information as strictly confidential and keeps that information within the agency. Any statistical information collected to meet funding requirements or for research and analysis has all identifying details removed.
- A consent form signed by the client is necessary before any information is obtained from other agencies/individuals or is given to other agencies/individuals.
- Client files are stored in locked filing cabinets and are available only to staff members specifically authorised to access that information. Closed files are kept under lock for seven years. Files are securely destroyed at the end of their life cycle.
- Electronic files are password protected and passwords are changed quarterly.
- Clients have the right to access their own personal files and may do so by making a request to GdA advocacy staff. Sometimes an appointment may be necessary. Under normal circumstances access is ensured within one week of a request being made. Exceptions to this access procedure exist where access to a file would pose a serious threat to the life or health of the person; would unreasonably affect the privacy of other individuals; would expose information given in confidence by a third party; would be unlawful or would be likely to prejudice a law enforcement function.

- **Staff are sensitive and respectful when discussing personal details regarding clients with other staff or staff from other agencies (with permission).**
- **Only relevant information will be given to other agencies, and only with the permission of the client following a specific request.**
- **Induction of staff and board members emphasises the importance of confidentiality within GdA; all staff and board members are required annually to sign a confidentiality agreement.**



### 3.9 PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

<b>Policy number</b>	3.9	<b>Version</b>	1
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<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	August 2018

GdA supports and encourages the participation and inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life. We acknowledge the intrinsic value of each person with a disability and promote the recognition of that value in the broader community through the following activities:

- Providing information to members about general community services in appropriate formats and through its newsletter. GdA supports referrals to, and utilisation of, those services. The agency also encourages community organisations, through education and personal approaches, to develop inclusive methods of attracting participants of all abilities to their programs.
- Supporting self-advocacy groups to meet and facilitating self-advocacy training.
- Conducting community education about the abilities, skills and contributions made by people with a disability through media releases, advertising, brochures, forums and liaison with a range of community groups.
- Assisting its clients to create and maintain ties, connections and involvements within the community as a whole.
- Advocating for policies, programs and strategies within the community that empower and advance the rights and interests of people with a disability (systemic advocacy).
- Establishing solid working relationships with other organisations aiming to achieve the same goals, e.g. Access for All Abilities, Rural Access.
- Providing presentations about advocacy and the rights of people with a disability to community groups, professional groups and tertiary students.
- Reflecting at all times and in all ways the valued contribution made by people with a disability in their communities, e.g. quarterly GdA newsletter
- Expecting all staff to treat people with a disability with respect and dignity, setting an example for other organisations.
- “Working with, and for, people with a disability” and ensuring that the client directs the resolution or representation process.
- Actively recruiting people with a disability for the board of management and regional advisory groups of Grampians disAbility Advocacy.

- **Employing people with a disability (see Affirmative Action Policy and Equal Employment Opportunity Policy).**
- **Including people with a disability in any forums or workshops organised by GdA to raise awareness of disability issues in the community, and ensuring people have the resources they need to attend these events, e.g. transport, attendant care.**
- **Incorporating feedback from consumer exit surveys and the annual consumer survey into the policies and procedures of the organisation.**



### 3.10 PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

<b>Policy number</b>	3.10	<b>Version</b>	1
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**At GdA we believe every individual has the right to be free from physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse. We also uphold the principles of respect for human dignity and freedom, equality before the law, privacy, protection against discrimination and equal opportunity in employment.**

**We act to prevent abuse and neglect and to uphold the legal and human rights of each person with a disability.**

**GdA staff, members and volunteers are required to treat all clients, each other and everyone else who comes into contact with the organisation with respect and consideration at all times.**

**A person who has allegedly been subjected to abuse will be supported and encouraged to make a formal complaint to the organisation concerned or the appropriate authorities, including the police, and will be referred to relevant counseling and support services.**

**In the case of allegations of abuse made by someone against GdA staff, members or volunteers, GdA has complaints and grievance resolution policies and procedures that will be adhered to. Any potentially criminal matters will be referred to police immediately.**

**Advocacy staff are trained in the function of the Office of the Public Advocate, and its statutory role in relation to abuse and neglect regarding people with a disability in the community. In particular training is provided in OPA's "Interagency Guideline for Addressing Violence, Neglect and Abuse (IGUANA)", published 2013.**

**Advocacy staff receive training in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, and how the charter can be utilised in advocacy practice.**

**The following are organizations staff can contact to assist clients to uphold their rights:**

<b>Victoria Police</b>	<b>000</b>
<b>National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline</b>	<b>1800 880 052</b>
<b>Office of the Public Advocate</b>	<b>1300 309 337</b>
<b>Villamanta Legal Service</b>	<b>1800 014 111</b>
<b>Victoria Legal Aid</b>	<b>1300 792 387</b>
<b>Domestic Violence Resource Centre Vic</b>	<b>1800 737 732</b>
<b>Disability Services Commissioner</b>	<b>1800 677 342</b>



### 3.11 CONFLICT OF INTEREST – STAFF

<b>Policy number</b>	3.11	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Drafted by</b>	D Verdon	<b>Reviewed</b>	14/9/2015
<b>Responsible persons</b>	Executive Officer	<b>Next review date</b>	Sept 2017

**Grampians disAbility Advocacy places great importance on avoiding, managing or eliminating any conflict of interest – perceived or real – when it comes to working with our clients.**

**GdA's geographical spread affects the resources of the organisation. In some instances there is only one advocate servicing two Local Government Areas. Some advocates have other employment apart from advocacy. Most advocates live in small to medium size communities and it is possible they will know their clients in other contexts. Consequently conflicts of interest can easily occur.**

**An actual conflict of interest is when a person could be influenced in doing their job because they have a private or personal interest in the matter.**

**A perceived conflict of interest is when it looks like a person could be influenced in doing their job because they have a private or personal interest in the matter.**

**Some examples of a conflict of interest are:-**

- **An advocate has another job as a TAFE teacher. They are asked to advocate for a student in their class.**
- **An advocate, in a previous job, was the case manager for a person seeking advocacy. As a result the advocate has knowledge of the client beyond that which an advocate would normally need. In this case it can also be difficult for the client to differentiate between a case management role and an advocacy role.**
- **An advocate is asked to represent a person in a complaint against a day program. The program manager is related to the advocate.**
- **GdA is asked to represent two clients in a dispute between them.**



How GdA deals with conflict of interest

**GdA will only advocate for one side of an advocacy issue. Where there are two or more people with a disability, or family members, in conflict with each other, GdA can support only one person. In these instances independent mediation is a more appropriate dispute resolution method.**

**If a conflict of interest arises, action will be taken to find an alternative advocate or organisation to assist the client with their issue.**

**The availability of an alternative GdA advocate will depend on the demand on GdA's advocacy resources at the time. This will be determined by the GdA EO.**

**GdA will make every effort to ensure that the client receives appropriate assistance with their issue. (See GdA Accessing Advocacy Policy)**

Some useful acronyms - by no means a complete list

<b>AAT</b>	<b>Administrative Appeals Tribunal</b>
<b>BADAC</b>	<b>Ballarat &amp; District Aboriginal Co-operative</b>
<b>BDRC</b>	<b>Barwon Disability Resource Council</b>
<b>CRU</b>	<b>Community Residential Unit</b>
<b>DANA</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Network Australia</b>
<b>DARU</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Resource Unit</b>
<b>DAV</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Victoria</b>
<b>DHHS</b>	<b>Department of Health and Human Service</b>
<b>DSS</b>	<b>Department of Social Services</b>
<b>GCH</b>	<b>Grampians Community Health</b>
<b>GDAA</b>	<b>Grampians Disability Advocacy Association</b>
<b>HACC</b>	<b>Home &amp; Community Care</b>
<b>NDIA</b>	<b>National Disability Insurance Agency</b>
<b>NDIS</b>	<b>National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>
<b>OFD</b>	<b>Office For Disability</b>
<b>SARU</b>	<b>Self Advocacy Resource Unit</b>
<b>VADN</b>	<b>Victorian Aboriginal Disability Network</b>
<b>VicDAN</b>	<b>Victorian Disability Advocacy Network</b>
<b>VICRAN</b>	<b>Victorian Rural Advocacy Network</b>