



GRAMPIANS DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION FOR ADVOCACY CLIENTS

This booklet is also available in large print and on CD



Contact details

People with a disability or someone ringing on behalf of a person with a disability can call Grampians Advocacy **TOLL FREE** on **1800 552 272** (Ararat Head Office).

Phone numbers for other sites are:

Ballarat	5333 7344
Horsham	5381 2400
Daylesford and Clunes	5348 3350
Stawell	5358 2164

For those who prefer email addresses they are:

Ararat	asas@netconnect.com.au
Ballarat	gdaab@bigpond.net.au
Horsham & Stawell	gdaah@bigpond.net.au
Daylesford & Clunes	gdaad@mmnet.com.au

Site addresses:

Ararat	Southwalk Arcade, 2/32 Tuson St, Ararat
Ballarat	Eastwood Leisure Centre, 20 Eastwood St, Ballarat
Horsham	Wimmera Sports Assembly, 17 McLachlan St, Horsham
Stawell (Tues)	Community Axis, 111 Main St, Stawell
Daylesford	Daylesford Community Health, Hospital St, Daylesford
Clunes (Tues)	Clunes Health Service, 69 Service St, Clunes

Postal addresses:

Ararat	PO Box 112, Ararat 3377
Ballarat	PO Box 1060, Bakery Hill 3354
Horsham and Stawell	PO Box 270, Horsham 3402
Daylesford and Clunes	PO Box 250, Daylesford 3460

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ABOUT GRAMPPIANS DISABILITY ADVOCACY

Our Mission

*This advocacy service listens to, takes direction from, and stands beside people with disability, from the Central Highlands to across the Wimmera, in their interactions with organisations and the community.
We help people to learn about and act on their rights to achieve the best possible result.*

Grampians disAbility Advocacy provides FREE advocacy support for people with a disability and their families or carers across the Grampians region of Victoria. The major cities and towns we service include Ballarat, Horsham, Ararat, Stawell, Daylesford, Clunes and Bacchus Marsh.

Local government areas covered by our service are the Rural City of Ararat, Horsham Rural City, City of Ballarat, Golden Plains Shire, Pyrenees Shire, Hepburn Shire, Moorabool Shire, West Wimmera Shire, Yarriambiack Shire, Northern Grampians Shire and Hindmarsh Shire.

Grampians disAbility Advocacy has outlets in Ararat, Ballarat, Stawell, Daylesford, Clunes and Horsham.

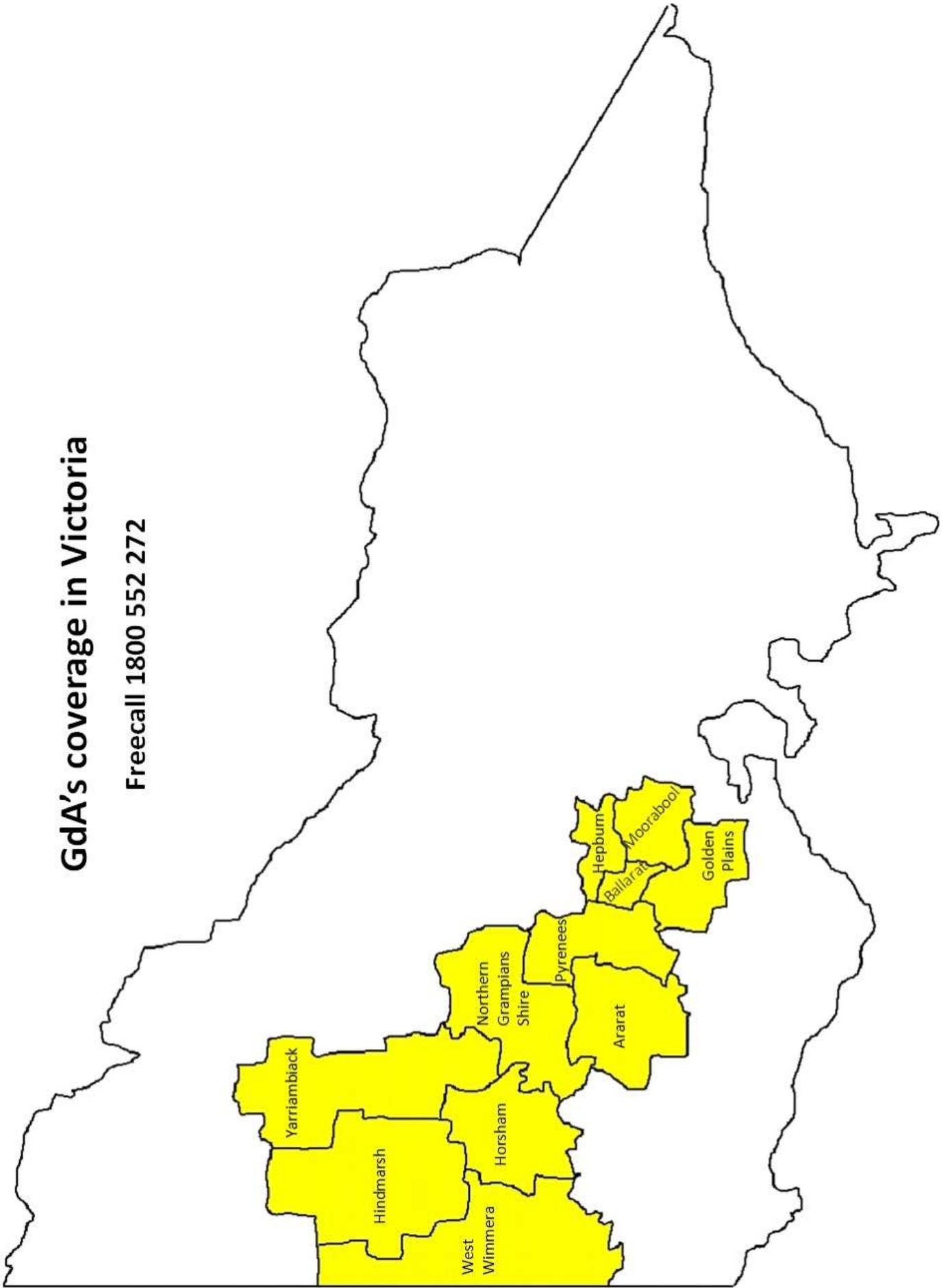
Although we receive our funding from Federal and State Governments, GdA is an independent advocacy service with a team of skilled workers who can help resolve many issues affecting people with disabilities.

Grampians disAbility Advocacy from time to time also joins with other advocacy services in working for changes in the way things are done by governments or large non-government organisations that will help all people with a disability. This is called systemic advocacy. Sometimes the ideas for systemic advocacy actions come from our individual clients.

If you think you might need our help, contact the GdA office closest to you or call us at our head office in Ararat. Our contact details are inside the front cover of this booklet.

GdA's coverage in Victoria

Freecall 1800 552 272



HOW CAN GdA ASSIST?

GdA helps people with a disability to stand up for their rights. We support people with a disability to:

- get information
- know their rights
- speak up and be heard
- negotiate a good outcome in regard to problems they may be facing
- make a complaint
- arrange and attend meetings with other organisations
- attend a court or tribunal hearing

Do you think we can assist you or someone you care for?

Feel free to call one of our advocates at the office closest to you or our Ararat head office to talk about your situation. Our contact details are on page 2 of this booklet.

Our advocate will ask you a bit about your situation and then explain how our service can assist you. If we can't help, our advocate will suggest other agencies that can.

If we are able to assist, our advocate will make an appointment with you to talk about your issue and ask you what outcome you want. It is important that you tell us **WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE**.

The advocate will give you information about different ways to resolve your issue and the likely outcomes. Once you decide on the action you'd like to take, our advocate will write up an **individual advocacy plan** with you. Depending on your situation the plan may include things you will do on your own, things your advocate will do with your permission, and/or joint action by you and your advocate.

Our service to you ends:

- If you request it to finish
- When your issue has been satisfactorily resolved
- If you and your advocate agree that a positive outcome is not possible

Sometimes we can't help you straight away

We are here to help people with any kind of disability. We treat everyone equally and fairly but we help people who most need assistance first.

We decide who needs help most by looking at:

1. How serious is the person's issue?
2. Can the person get assistance from another service?
3. What is the person's ability to deal with the issue on their own, or with limited support?
4. Is the person at risk, for example of becoming homeless or experiencing abuse or neglect?

It is our policy that, under normal circumstances, a staff member will respond to you within five working days. Usually it does not take this long for someone from GdA to get in touch with you.

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GdA's CLIENTS?

If you become a client of our service, you have the right to:

- Respect
- Privacy
- Access our service without discrimination
- Be informed about available support
- Choose from available alternatives
- Pursue any complaint about service provision without retribution
- Obtain copies of GdA Standards Policies and Procedures
- Have any service information made available to you in an appropriate language or alternative format
- Have an interpreting service available upon request
- Involve a support person of your choice. This could be a carer, a family member, friend, or a staff member from another agency

As a client of our service, you also have a responsibility to:

- Provide GdA with the information we need to advocate effectively for you
- Let your advocate know if you are unable to keep an appointment
- Behave respectfully towards our staff. Abuse, threats or violence are not acceptable behaviours. Any person who acts in this way will be asked to change their behaviour. If the threatening behaviour continues, then the person will be asked to leave the office. This may mean that we can no longer help you.

GdA, PRIVACY AND YOU

We collect information about you and your case. This is so you and your advocate can track the progress being made with your issue and decide if any changes need to be made to the actions taken.

GdA recognises **your right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality**. Any information collected about you will be used only for the purpose of resolving your issue. You have a right to withhold personal information from GdA for privacy reasons.

GdA will attempt to ensure that all information kept about you is accurate and up to date. If your information needs updating at any time, please let your advocate know.

All information you provide to GdA will be kept strictly confidential. This means your information will be:

- Stored in a safe place. Any information that we record on paper or hold on your behalf will be locked in a filing cabinet.

- Only discussed with other GdA staff if they are directly involved in resolving your issue. For example, your advocate might need to seek advice from the GdA Executive Officer about your case, or another GdA advocate may need to work with you while your own advocate is on leave.
- Only released to other people with your permission and only if it helps to resolve your issue. GdA must ask for your written approval before we can talk about your issue with anyone outside of our service. The only exceptions to this are if a magistrate or judge requests your file as part of court proceedings or in the case of an emergency where your safety is at risk.
- Destroyed after your issue is resolved. When we finish working with you, we are required by law to keep records for a period of seven years. Your information will then be destroyed.
- Collected directly from you unless you give us written permission to obtain information from other sources.

Your advocate will make sure you know how the information collected about you is being used.

You have a right to access your file. You can do this by making an appointment with your advocate or by submitting a written request.

Information collected for reporting purposes

GdA summarises information about the types of issues we are helping people resolve, about who is using our service (their age, sex, cultural background and type of disability), and the outcomes achieved.

We study this information to learn how to improve our service. We also use it to show the State and Federal Governments that the money we receive is being used well.

No personal information is included in any reports and your identity and any specific details about you are not revealed.

What should I do if I feel that my privacy has been breached?

If you are concerned that your privacy has not been properly respected you can make an appointment to talk about this with the Executive Officer. If the issue cannot be resolved, the Executive Officer will advise you of the next step to take in order to make a complaint.

If you would like more information, or to discuss the GdA Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality Policy or Complaints Procedure, please ask the Executive Officer of GdA. You can phone the EO on 1800 552 272.

You may also contact the Australian Privacy Commissioner to raise your concerns on 1300 363 992.

IF YOU ARE UNHAPPY WITH OUR SERVICE

You have a right to make a complaint.

How?

1. Lodge your complaint in writing with the Executive Officer of GdA or phone the Executive Officer on Ph: 1800 552 272. (If writing please use the address provided for the Chairperson in point 3 below)
2. The Executive Officer will talk through the matter with you and try to resolve the issue to your satisfaction.
3. If you don't want to talk to the Executive Officer or you are unhappy with the outcome, please put your complaint in writing to GdA's Chairperson:
The Chairperson
Grampians disAbility Advocacy Association
PO Box 112, Ararat, VIC 3377

Mark the envelope "Private & Confidential".

4. The GdA Board or a Special Complaints Committee will attempt to resolve your complaint within seven working days of receiving your written complaint.
5. If the matter is still unresolved, the help of an independent conciliator will be sought, e.g. the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction you may wish to contact the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS).

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

FREE CALL NUMBER	1800 880 052
TTY	1800 301 130
NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE	1800 555 677
TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE	13 14 50

email: crrs@workfocus.com

website: www.crrs.net.au

GdA's complaints policy and procedures is included in the standards policy booklet given to you when you first meet with your advocate.

You may wish to have a family member or friend assist you in making a complaint, or GdA can recommend other organisations that can provide you with support.

Your complaint will remain confidential and will only be talked about with people who need to know so that the problem can be resolved.

FEEDBACK ABOUT GdA'S SERVICE

We welcome your feedback about our advocacy service. We like to hear positive comments but we are especially interested in hearing about what you think we can do to improve our service.

When we finish working with you we will ask you to fill out an exit survey about your experience. This is your opportunity to tell us what worked well, and what we could do better.

In addition, please feel free to talk to your advocate or the Executive Officer any time you have a problem with our work. It doesn't matter if you think your problem is small or big, we will work through the issue with you.

**GdA is committed to working with you to build a better service
for people with a disability**

GdA POLICIES

GdA has a comprehensive set of policies to guide us in meeting the 10 disability advocacy standards set by the Federal Government. These are presented in GdA's policy booklet. The booklet is available in easy English, large print or on CD.

You will be given a copy of the policy booklet by your advocate at your first meeting.

WHO RUNS GdA?

GdA is committed to giving people with a disability a say in how GdA is managed.

GdA is run by a Board elected each year by our members at the annual general meeting. At least half of the Board is made up of people with a disability. Other Board members include people who work with people with disabilities and members of the general community who have a commitment to promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

Any GdA member can nominate for the Board. People with a disability and carers are particularly encouraged and supported to become Board members.

The Board meets once a month. Meetings are usually held in Ararat, but GdA covers the costs of travel if members come from other towns. It is also possible to join Board meetings via telephone.

JOINING GdA

Anyone with an interest in disability related issues can join GdA. Membership is free.

Members receive a newsletter four times a year and are invited to any special events organised by GdA. The newsletter will keep you up to date with issues of interest to people with disabilities at national, state and local levels.

GdA also has advisory groups in Horsham and Ballarat to keep us up to date with issues in our two major rural centres.

If you would like to find out more about joining GdA, our Board or one of our advisory groups, please contact GdA's Ararat office on 1800 552 272.

OTHER USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Your situation may mean that you need advice from an agency other than GdA. One or more of the following organisations may also be able to help you.

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Ph: 9416 4003

VALID is an advocacy group for adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. VALID's mission is to protect and defend the human rights of people with an intellectual disability and to champion their rights as citizens.

Disability Discrimination Legal Service Ph: 1300 882 872

DDLIS promotes justice for people with disabilities and offers free legal services, including information, referral, advice, casework assistance, community legal education, and policy and law reform.

Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council Ph: 9387 8317

VMIAC supports people who are experiencing a mental illness or emotional distress. VMIAC can provide information, advice, individual and group advocacy.

Commonwealth Ombudsman Ph: 1300 362 072

The Commonwealth Ombudsman investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly by an Australian Government department or agency, e.g. Centrelink.

AED Legal Centre Ph: 9639 4333

AED provides legal advocacy to people with a disability in the areas of employment, education and training. Their main purpose is to protect and advance the rights of people

with a disability who experience difficulties and/or discrimination in employment or education because of their disability.

Office of the Public Advocate

Ph: 1300 309 337

OPA investigates and speaks out about situations where people with disabilities are exploited, neglected or abused. The Victorian Office of the Public Advocate aims to promote and protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

Villamanta Legal Service

Ph: 1800 014 111

VLS is a free, state-wide community legal service that informs people in Victoria who have a disability about the law and helps them to use the law to get their rights. It works mostly for people who have an intellectual disability or other cognitive impairment.