



# NEWSLETTER – September 2017

## “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*

### GdA joins in NAIDOC Week Celebrations at BADAC



*Grampians disAbility Advocacy*



**ABOVE:** Grampians Advocacy Exec Officer Debbie Verdon and Ballarat advocate Fiona Tipping at the GdA stall at BADAC during NAIDOC Week. Debbie and Fiona used the opportunity to spread the word about what to do if you disagree with a decision made by the National Disability Insurance Agency.

National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week is a highlight of the year at Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative. GdA was proud to be invited to participate in the community day on July 6 to spread the word about advocacy and how GdA can help with the NDIS. Many questions were answered and brochures handed out. Anyone from BADAC wishing to find out how advocacy can help you is invited to see Fiona Tipping each Friday at BADAC at the community tea room table.



### **DISABLED PATRONS WELCOME IMPROVED ACCESS AT BALLARAT CINEMA**

People with a disability are benefiting from a major upgrade to the entrance and interior of Ballarat’s Regent Cinema thanks to the sustained advocacy efforts of Grampians Advocacy and its Board and members. After many years of lobbying GdA took the issue to the Human Rights division of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, where the Cinema management and Ballarat City Council came together to design significant improvements to the footpath and roadway. Fully accessible toilets are now also installed in the Cinema. Door handles have been lowered to allow some people with a disability to enter the building independently. GdA thanks Disability Discrimination Legal Service for its expert advice and assistance in taking the matter to VCAT for the benefit of all.



## Guide dog Brogan catches record 300th flight with handler James Bennett



Brogan the Guide Dog recently took to the skies for the 300<sup>th</sup> time

Ten years ago, James Bennett literally lost his sight overnight. A problem with his heart cut blood supply to the optic nerves, impairing his vision. Earlier this year, he received an Order of Australia medal for his services to the blind and low-vision community. Part of his work involves mentoring and advocating for blind people.

"I understand the absolute frustration of not being able to get assistance, in a lot of cases not having our disability recognised, in particular when it comes to restaurants or public places where you get 'you cannot come in here with that dog'".

Mr Bennett's loyal Labrador Guide Dog Brogan recently accompanied him to Alice Springs, to provide services to the blind and low-vision community. It was Brogan's 300<sup>th</sup> flight. "It's a huge milestone and a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the degree of independence the dogs give us," Mr Bennett said.

The event was marked by a special cake made of meat and carrots, which was practically inhaled by Brogan within seconds. Brogan knows Sydney Airport better than most. About 75 times a year, he guides Mr Bennett through check-in and security, before finding the closest counter so they can be directed to the right gate. Brogan gets his own boarding pass, but doesn't earn frequent flyer points. He then helps the 70-year-old board, guiding him past the ticket desk and onto the plane. It is a complex and lengthy process, but Paul Adrian from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT said it was one Brogan had been trained to handle. Once he is on the plane, Brogan lies underneath his handler's seat, where unlike most other passengers he can comfortably snooze.

*(Story from ABC Online 17/7/2017)*

## INCREASED POWER FOR VICTORIAN DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSIONER

From July 31 2017, unusual or unexpected deaths that occur in Victorian Disability Services – as well as any deaths referred by the State Coroner – will be reviewed by the office of the Disability Services Commissioner. This referral is the direct result of recommendations in last year's Final Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into abuse and disability services. Stories shared during the inquiry of tragic and avoidable deaths of people with a disability in Victorian disability services showed that the sector can do better by the people it serves. One story shared during the inquiry was of a young person at a disability service who died choking on a foreign object. This person was known to put objects into their mouth, and yet it was found that the service provider's strategies to manage choking risks were inadequate and they had insufficient staff to support the needs of all their clients. Additional oversight of these deaths will help identify any practice and systemic issues in the way that disability services are delivered in Victoria, with the opportunity to provide advice and recommendations on improving and eliminating these issues. The Commissioner will review Category One incident reports of client deaths sent from the Department of Health and Human Services and will contact service providers if there are questions that are not answered by the incident report.

More information: ODSC **1300 728 187**

### International Day of People with Disability

(IDPwD) is held on December 3 each year. IDPwD is a United Nations sanctioned day that is celebrated internationally. It aims to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability and celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disability. The Australian Government has been supporting IDPwD since 1996 and provides funds to promote and raise awareness of the day around Australia. Information on how individuals and organisations can get involved in the day and how to break down barriers (both structural and attitudinal) for people with disability can be found on the website [www.idpwd.com.au](http://www.idpwd.com.au)



## Update on the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool Scheme

The scheme is an attempt to redress the wrongs of the past when people with a disability were paid a wage according to an assessment tool that was later found to be discriminatory by the High Court. Registrations for the scheme closed on 30 April 2017. More than 12,000 registrations and almost 8,000 applications for payment have been received.

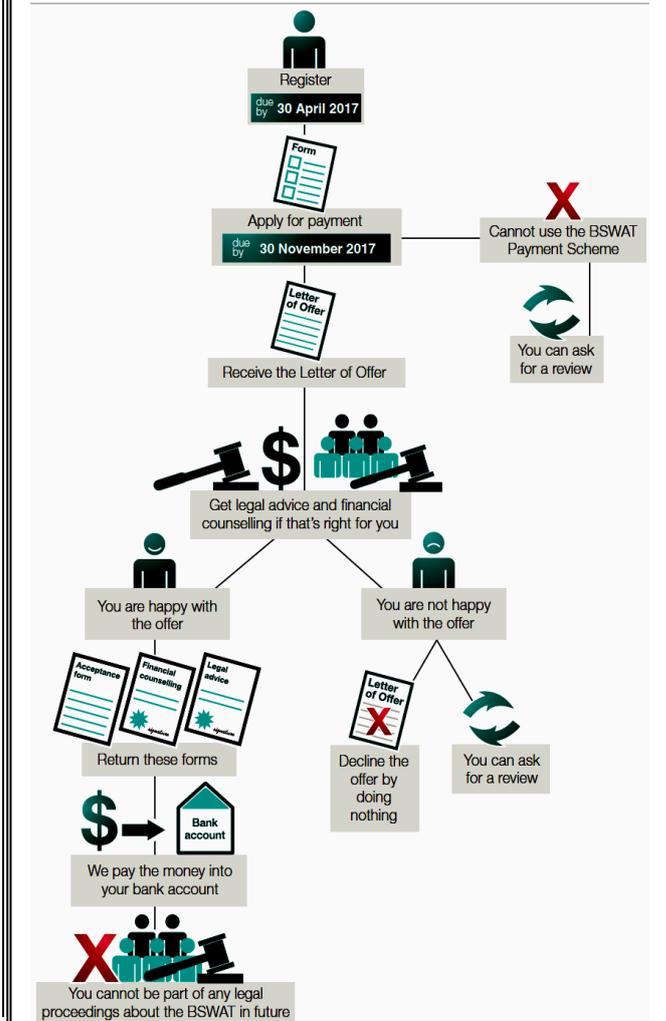
### **When will applicants hear back from the Scheme?**

Registrations and applications are currently being processed. Due to the volume of forms received, it may take some time before people are contacted.

If someone you know would like to find out about the status of their application, phone: **1800 799 515**.

### Applying for a payment

Many people who registered for the scheme applied for a payment at the same time. Some people registered for the scheme only, which means they now need to submit a payment application. All payment applications must be submitted by 30 November 2017.



## **Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition**

**(from DARU Newsletter 21/8/17)**

There are an estimated 64,000 people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition who will become NDIS participants by 2019-2020. For these people the Scheme presents a significant opportunity to increase supports and improve outcomes. However, psychosocial disability differs from physical and sensory disabilities in important ways and presents the Scheme with significant challenges. Alongside the NDIS, the mental health sector is also undergoing significant parallel reform with the development of the Fifth National Mental Health Plan, which COAG has now adopted. People with mental illness will continue to require services even if they are not NDIS participants. There is a need to clarify and make public how these services will be delivered and address the emerging gaps created by the transition of existing services into the NDIS. For more information go to the NDIS website [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) or visit your local NDIS agency or phone **1800 800 110**.

## **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.**

# 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 [asas@netconnect.com.au](mailto:asas@netconnect.com.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.

## 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](mailto:asas@netconnect.com.au)



[www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au](http://www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au)



PO Box 112  
ARARAT 3377

POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA

