

MARCH 2023



## GdA Wurreker Awards finalists



GdA is proud to have been named a finalist in the 2022 Wurreker Awards. GdA was nominated for the Community Based Employer Award. Indigenous advocate Fiona Tipping was nominated for the Community Based Employee Award. The awards are presented by **Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.**



L to R: Deb Verdon (EO), Thomas Marks (GdA Board Member) and Fiona Tipping (GdA Indigenous Advocate)



**I-PaLS**

Independent Pathways and Living Skills

**2023**

Programs will be commencing in Horsham, Hopetoun, Harrow, Ararat and Meredith

Call 1800 552 272 for more information about the I-PaLS program

**GdA Website**

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

The GdA website has many useful resources and links, information, past newsletters, Annual Reports, and the GdA referral form.

If you or someone you know would like to become a member of GdA, there is an application form as well as a feedback form available online.

## **A new system for appealing an NDIS decision**

The NDIS has created an Independent Expert Review (IER) program to help reduce the number of cases needing to go through to an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) hearing. The IER program involves the referral of a matter involving an application for external review of an NDIA decision to an Independent Expert.

The Independent Expert will review the matter and may meet with the participant in the process. The Independent Expert will make a recommendation as to the appropriate outcome of the matter.

The IER is a free, voluntary and confidential process that will be conducted within the current legislative requirements of the NDIS Act and Rules.

Visit the [An improved approach to dispute resolution](#) webpage to learn more.

Contact [Independentexpertreview@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Independentexpertreview@ndis.gov.au) for further information on the IER program.

## **Mobility barriers a feature of a heritage city**

Ballarat's heritage facilities and buildings can provide a link to the city's past, but are they maintaining an outdated degree of inaccessibility for mobility-aided and disabled people? GdA Board Member Mark Thompson, pictured below, is constantly challenged by curbed footpaths, narrow access, bluestone blocks. The City of Ballarat is working to make the region more inclusive. The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan outlines a priority goal to review accessibility and inclusivity of the City of Ballarat facilities, such as the libraries, early years services, Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre and the Art Gallery within the next two years. To read the full Ballarat Times article go to:

<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/heritage-a-highlight-for-mobility-issues/>



## **New GdA Board of Governance Member**



Craig Townsend, originally from Ballarat, worked in Melbourne as a commercial photographer for 20 years. He returned to Ballarat and built a "passive solar house". He has worked in retail, is a foster carer and is currently training in animal care. Craig has a lived experience of disability and was a member of an NDIS Participant Reference Group when the NDIS was rolled out. Craig is also a member of the Ballarat Autism Meet-up Group and was involved in the Hidden Histories program. Craig enjoys scuba diving, exploring shipwrecks, marine life, clay art, improvisation and "clowning".

**GdA welcomes  
Craig "on board"**



## MLAK - KEY FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY TO ACCESS PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK) system allows people with disability access to dedicated public facilities, including facilities in National Parks and many Council facilities, elevators at railway stations, the new Changing Places facilities throughout Australia and accessible toilets that are locked.

People with a disability are able to purchase a MLAK key that will open all doors, toilets, playground equipment and other facilities fitted with a lock that has the special MLAK cylinder. Victorian Companion Card holders are entitled to one free MLAK key through a partnership with the Victorian Government. Go to the website for more info and to apply for the MLAK key.

[www.masterlocksmiths.com.au/mlak/](http://www.masterlocksmiths.com.au/mlak/)

## State Trustees Grant for peer support

**Grampians disAbility Advocacy** has received a State Trustees Australia Foundation Community Inclusion Grant to support its Peer Support groups in the Grampians region.

The groups are free and aim to counter social isolation, disconnection and poor health and mental health outcomes through shared learning, connection and social activity, with an emphasis on having fun.

To find out more or to join a group in Ararat or Stawell phone GdA on 1800 552 272 or email [admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au](mailto:admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au)



Sister Rocks peer support group members in Stawell



### Reminder: Disability Royal Commission Counselling Services

The Disability Royal Commission submissions closed on 31 December 2022, however, Blue Knot Foundation continues to provide a free, specialist counselling support and referral service for people with disability, their families and carers, and anyone affected by the Disability Royal Commission. To access the service, call 1800 421 468 during opening hours: 9am - 6pm AEDT Monday to Friday; 9am - 5pm AEDT Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

## NDIS MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

**This toolkit is designed to provide you with the information, skills and support to advocate for what you want under the National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Go to the Independent Mental Health Advocacy website to learn more about navigating and preparing for the NDIS process.

[www.imha.vic.gov.au/ndis-mental-health-toolkit](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/ndis-mental-health-toolkit)



## The Disability Support Guide

The DSG provides the gateway to connect Australians living with a disability, their families and carers with disability support providers through a suite of resources via an easy-to-use search engine.

Options include: registered and non-registered providers, service types, support categories and suburbs. Information is also provided about the NDIS & Aged Care.

[www.disabilitysupportguide.com.au](http://www.disabilitysupportguide.com.au)

**Inclusive Sport and Recreation**



This year Sports Central in Ballarat is hosting a number of All Abilities Sports Programs

### **Ballarat Basketball - All Abilities Hoops**

Call 5338 1220

### **Basketball Ballarat Wheelchair Basketball**

Email: [jacqui.alexander@ballaratbasketball.com](mailto:jacqui.alexander@ballaratbasketball.com)

### **Ballarat Netball Association - All-Abilities Netball**

Call 5331 7713 or email [bnaprider@gmail.com](mailto:bnaprider@gmail.com)

### **Special Olympics Ballarat**

Special Olympics Ballarat has aquatics, basketball, equestrian, golf, gymnastics, and tenpin bowling programs that run throughout each school term.

### **Disability Sports Australia Active Inclusion Sports Day Event Ballarat**

In Ballarat on March 14. Activate Inclusion Sports Days are an initiative of Disability Sports Australia, focused on promoting active pathways for kids with a disability. Selkirk Stadium, Wendouree, from 10:00am-1:00pm



### **What does GdA do?**

- \*Help you write a letter or submission to represent your interests
- \*Make a telephone call with/for you or help get info to resolve a concern
- \*Find information about another agency that may be able to assist
- \*Provide information on disability issues
- \*Support people to advocate for themselves

### **GdA Office**

- ❖ Ararat
- ❖ Horsham
- ❖ Daylesford
- ❖ Ballarat
- ❖ Clunes

**Central Intake 1800 552 272**

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

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