



GRAMPIANS DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION

ADVOCACY  
INFORMATION

**This booklet is also available in large print**



[www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au](http://www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au)  
**Facebook @Grampians Advocacy**  
**Twitter @GrampiansA**  
**Instagram: advocacymatters**



[www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au](http://www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au)  
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People with a disability or someone ringing on behalf of a person with a disability can call Intake at Grampians Advocacy

**TOLL FREE on 1800 552 272 (Ararat Head Office).**

GdA has been providing a free service since 1996. Previously, GdA was called Ararat & Stawell Advocacy Services (ASAS)

Advocacy is available as a free service across 11 Local Government Areas. GdA has outlets in Ararat, Ballarat and Daylesford. Outreach appointments are conducted at Stawell and Clunes. Horsham appointments are by arrangement with the advocate. The 11 LGAs are Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Horsham, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Ararat, Ballarat, Hepburn and Moorabool. GdA's sub-contractor is Assert 4 All. It services Golden Plains Shire. GdA is regularly audited to ensure all service standards are maintained to a quality assurance.

GdA prides itself on being an inclusive and caring organisation. Please contact the Intake Officer at Ararat head office for any enquiries and referrals. We endeavour to respond within five working days.

**Ararat Office**

Southwalk Arcade  
Shop 2, 32 Tuson St, Ararat  
PO Box 112, Ararat 3377

**1800 552 272**

**Ph: (03) 5352 2722**

**Fax: (03) 5352 2733**

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

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# ABOUT GRAMPIANS DISABILITY ADVOCACY

## *Our Mission*

GdA stands beside people with a disability as they:

- \*Are empowered to live the life they choose**
- \*Understand and act on their human rights**
- \*Connect and build confidence, independence and friendships**

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.

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. GdA also has an Indigenous Advocate who provides culturally safe support for First Nations Peoples.

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. An example of systemic advocacy is campaigning for better access to public buildings or transport.

## NDIS Appeals Support

Since the start of 2017 GdA has also received Federal Government funding to provide support for people who disagree with a decision made by the National Disability Insurance Agency. This includes anyone whose application to be a participant has been rejected, or anyone who does not agree with what is in their NDIS Plan. Please call us if you would like more information.

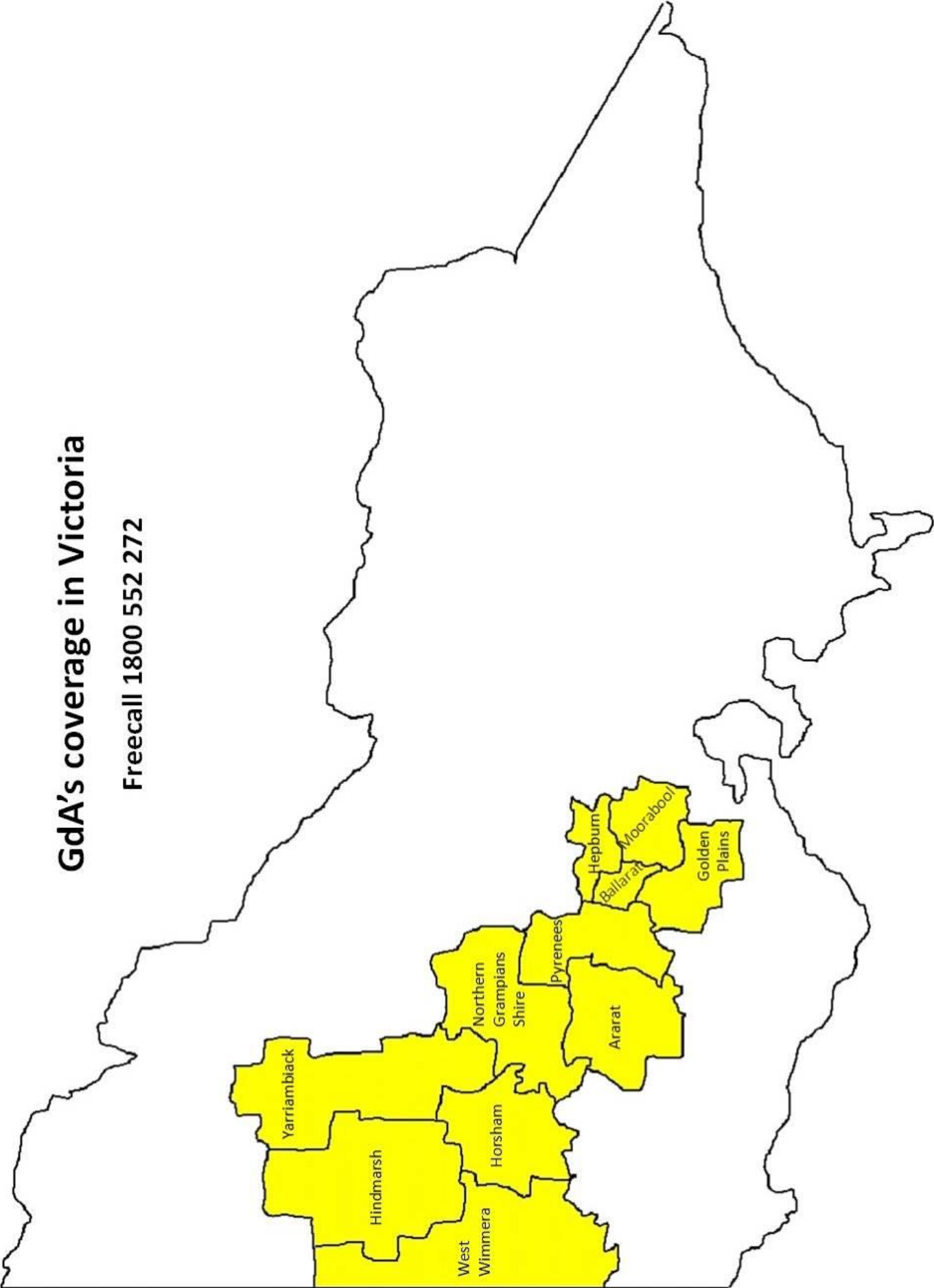
Ararat head office: INTAKE - 1800 552 272

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

Facebook @GrampiansAdvocacy  
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Instagram advocacymatters

# 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 our Ararat head office to talk about your situation. Our contact details are 1800 552 272 or [admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au](mailto:admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au)

Or you can direct message us via our Facebook page @GrampiansAdvocacy

Our intake worker will ask you a bit about your situation and then explain how our service can assist you. If we can't help, we will suggest other agencies that can. If we can't help you straight away you will be asked if you would like to be placed on our waitlist.

If we are able to assist, an 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
- If threatening or hostile behaviour is displayed towards staff and all reasonable steps have been taken to mitigate the behaviour

## **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.**

## YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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 payback
- 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 involved in resolving your issue or are likely to have information that will help resolve your case. For example, your advocate might need to seek advice from the GdA Executive Officer about your case during supervision, 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**

If you are unhappy with our service, we encourage you to give us feedback or make a complaint. We depend on your feedback to improve our service.

You have a right to be safe from negative consequences for speaking up. You have a right to have someone independent help you complain.

We can arrange an interpreter if you need one.

We will investigate your complaint fully and keep you informed about the progress and outcome of your complaint.

### **Complaints Process**

#### **Step 1**

We encourage you to discuss your concerns with your advocate.

#### **Step 2**

If you tell your advocate you are not happy with their response, he or she will raise your concern with their manager, or you can contact the manager directly by phone on 1800 552 272 or by emailing [admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au](mailto:admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au)

#### **Step 3**

After the manager receives the complaint they will contact you within five working days, and try to resolve the complaint within 10 working days.

#### **Step 4**

If the manager cannot resolve the complaint, they will take it to a more senior manager, e.g. Executive Officer. The senior Manager will then contact you within five working days. You can also choose to write a letter to the GdA Executive Officer [admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au](mailto:admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au) or post it to PO Box 112, Ararat 3377

#### **Step 5**

If you remain unhappy with the way your concern has been handled you can contact either of the organisations below for assistance.

### **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service**

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

email: [crrs@workfocus.com](mailto:crrs@workfocus.com)

website: [www.crrs.net.au](http://www.crrs.net.au)

### **Disability Services Commissioner**

FREE CALL NUMBER	1800 677 342
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email: [complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au)

website: <https://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/>

## **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 disability standards set by the Federal and State Government. The Policies are about the Governance of GdA, the management of the service and how advocates do their work. You can request a copy of the policy booklet by contacting [admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au](mailto:admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au)

## **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 or video conferencing, e.g. Zoom.

## **JOINING GdA (see application form at back of booklet)**

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 an advisory group to keep us up to date with issues across the Central Highlands. If you would like to find out more about joining GdA, our Board or our advisory group, 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.: 03 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.

**Website:** [www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)

### **Disability Discrimination Legal Service** **Ph: 1300 882 872**

DDLs 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. **Website:** [www.ddls.org.au](http://www.ddls.org.au)

### **Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council** **Ph: 03 9380 3900**

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

**Website:** [www.vmiac.org.au](http://www.vmiac.org.au)

### **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.

**Website:** [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)

### **AED Legal Centre** **Ph: 03 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.

**Website:** [www.aed.org.au](http://www.aed.org.au)

### **Independent Mental Health Advocacy** **Ph: 1300 947 820**

IMHA support people who are receiving compulsory psychiatric treatment to have as much say as possible about their assessment, treatment and recovery.

Our service is an integral component in realising the reforms and vision of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. IMHA advocates are based in Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo and Dandenong, but support people across Victoria. Their service is independent, free and confidential.

**Website:** [www.imha.vic.gov.au](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au)

**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.

**Website: [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)**

**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.

**Website: [www.villamanta.org.au](http://www.villamanta.org.au)**

**NDIS National Disability Insurance Scheme****Ph: 1800 800 110**

If you are a person with a disability and you meet the access requirements you can become a participant in the scheme.

**Website: [www.ndis.org.au](http://www.ndis.org.au)**

**NDIA National Disability Insurance Agency****Ph: 1800 800 110**

It is a government agency whose role is to implement and manage the NDIS and ensure people with disability continue to get the support they need. The NDIA works with local communities to improve inclusion of people with a disability and build awareness of disability. Assistance is available for people seeking an internal review of an NDIS decision.

**Latrobe Community Health (Local Area Coordinator for NDIS Support) Ph: 1800 242 696**

Latrobe Community Health is the Local Area Coordinator for the NDIS in the Central Highlands region. It prepares communities for the rollout of the NDIS. It also provides local planning services for the NDIS **Website: [www.lchs.com.au](http://www.lchs.com.au)**

# Why should I join Grampians *disAbility* Advocacy Association?

You will be a member of an organisation that is committed to promoting quality of life, human rights and self-advocacy for all people with a disability. This association is run by a volunteer Board of Governance, made up of people with a disability and community members.

**Our Motto:** “Our Choice, Our Voice.”

**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.

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## TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

### **Full member:**

This is for any person who has an interest in or a lived experience of disability. Full members have one vote at any meeting of the Association. These members are able to nominate for a role on the Association’s Board of Governance.

### **Associate member:**

Any person who does not meet the requirements of full membership or who does not want to have voting rights. This membership is also for Organisations wishing to be members. Associate members have no voting rights.

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## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Individual members can be on the Board of Governance
- Individual members can vote at meetings
- Members can attend all general meetings
  - All members are able to attend GdA events and functions
  - A free printed copy of our Quarterly newsletter
  - Membership is FREE

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

I would like to become a member of Grampians disAbility Advocacy Association (GdA). I support the Mission, Values and Goals of the Association as shown in the Annual Report and available on the GdA website.

I agree to comply with the GdA Rules of Association.

I understand that my membership will need to be approved by the Board of Governance. Once approved the membership will be valid for three (3) years. After the three (3) years, I will be contacted about renewing my membership.

MY CONTACT DETAILS				
NAME				
ADDRESS				
PHONE NUMBER				
EMAIL ADDRESS				
DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY?	YES		NO	
EMERGENCY OR SUPPORT PERSON CONTACT DETAILS (optional)				
NAME				
PHONE NUMBER				
EMAIL ADDRESS				
RELATIONSHIP				
TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP YOU ARE APPLYING FOR				
<b>FULL MEMBERSHIP</b> → Lived experience or an interest in disability → Membership has voting rights		<b>ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP</b> → Organisation or individual → Membership has NO voting rights		
GET INVOLVED				
Do you want us to contact you about being on the Board of Governance?	YES		NO	
Would you like to be contacted about being on an advisory group or committee?	YES		NO	

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*Return to GdA Admin PO Box 112 Ararat 3377 or admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au