



JUNE 2023



Central Highlands Regional Advisory Group farewells Exec Officer after 20 years

GdA EO Deb Verdon said goodbye to the CHRAG at the May meeting in Ballarat. Ms Verdon is set to retire this month. Achievements over the past 20 years include successful campaigns to improve accessibility at public venues, accessible car parking and more user friendly road crossings. Ms Verdon said one of the highlights for the group was the announcement of \$51m funding for the long-awaited access improvements at the Ballarat Railway Station. Improvements will be in place in time for the Commonwealth Games in Ballarat in March 2026.



ABOVE: CHRAG members at the May meeting (L-R) Craig Townsend, GdA Executive Officer Deb Verdon, Bec Paton, Mark Thompson and GdA Ballarat Advocate Phil Cutts
Absent: Bernadette Duffy, Kay Timmins, Caitlyn Johnston

GdA Welcomes New Central Highlands I-PALS Project Officers



Matilda Schembri



Tadc Quirke

See Page 3 for more details about the I-PALS program



Accessible Walks, Victoria

This work is part of a project for giving people with disability greater access to nature walks. A partnership between Victoria Walks and Scope Australia has been supported by the Victorian Government Access for All Abilities initiative.

Victoria Walks is seeking your assistance in getting word out about these great walks, suitable for everyone in our community. Many walks have been audited by people with disability, for people with disability.

26 Walking Maps have been created across Victoria.

Find them here:

<https://walkingmaps.com.au/access/walks>



Stella Young Memorial unveiled

The memorial statue of prominent activist Stella Young was officially unveiled by The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP on March 30 at CATO Park. More than 100 people attended the official ceremony. The Remembering Stella Young Project was supported by the Victorian Government and the Northern Grampians Shire Council. The Statue sits on the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjah, Wergaia and Jupagulk lands, represented by Barengi Gadlin Land Council. To find out more about Stella, (the girl who grew up in Stawell), visit the website [Remembering Stella Young](#) and learn about her life as a disability activist, writer, and comedian. Stella also served as a member of the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, Youth Disability Advocacy Service and Women with Disabilities Victoria. GdA's ILC Project Manager Carol Starkey served as a member of the Stella Young Project Advisory Group. An article well worth reading is online at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/i-keep-thinking-moment-following-stella-young-statue-bryce-ives>



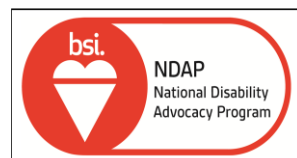
Photo courtesy of the Northern Grampians Shire webpage: <https://www.ngshire.vic.gov.au/Community/Remembering-Stella-Young-Statue> The Design and Sculpture is by Artist Danny Fraser, with contributions by a group of Wimmera artists with a disability. The statue sits beside the picturesque Cato Lake at Cato Park in Stawell

A	N	P
P	C	T
L	I	A

There are at least 94 words in the Jumble Word Puzzle above. How many can you make? Only 4 letter words or more can be made, letters can only be used once. Good luck finding the 9 letter word.



GdA has recently completed another disability standards audit conducted by BSI Group.
We would like to thank all the people that participated in the consumer feedback survey and consultations. We are proud to be able to continue to offer a quality service to all our clients and people that reach out to us for support.



OUT & ABOUT

GdA combined with One Red Tree Resource Centre to host a National Reconciliation Week afternoon tea on May 29. The theme of NRW 2023 was “Be A Voice For Generations”. Celebration of NRW each year is a key objective in GdA’s newly developed Reconciliation Action Plan.



Front LtoR: Thomas Marks, Fiona Tipping, Deb Verdon, Tammie Meehan, Talwinder Kaur, Serenah Nam, Bernie O’Shannessy **Back LtoR:** Carol Starkey, Sarah Garton, Amanda Starick, Sherree Unwin, Doug McKinnon, Sue Horvath, Sally Tavares, Emma Naughten, Paul O’Shannessy **Photo:** Lesley Lewis, Ararat Advocate



GdA’s I-PALS Program is designed to bring people together, build skills, enhance confidence and grow independence. Run in a fun and supportive environment, I-PALS encourages people to share, learn and grow while having fun, making friends and learning about the community.

The I-PALS program covers topics including

- ❖ Social Skills
- ❖ Staying safe in your community
- ❖ Understanding your legal and tenancy rights
- ❖ Being part of your community by working and volunteering

Plus some great guest speakers & outings!

CALL 1800 552 272 or email admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au to find out more

FIGHTING NDIS FRAUD

The Commonwealth Government allocated \$48.3 million in the Federal budget for anti-fraud measures around the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including new IT systems.

The minister for NDIS and for Government Services, Bill Shorten, said that the allocation would fund 200 extra staff, as well as the development of a business case for ICT systems to detect, prevent and reduce non-compliant payments.

Mr Shorten said the funding was critical to ensure every dollar of the scheme was going to support people with a disability. “We have found evidence of egregious fraud that involves complex criminal networks ripping off NDIS participants and Australian taxpayers,” Mr Shorten said. “This funding will ensure the agency has the capability to address fraud and non-compliance.”

New Disability Support Pension Impairment Tables provide better support for Australians living with disability

The DSP Impairment Tables have been updated from April 1, 2023. The new Tables include changes which address recommendations raised in the Senate Inquiry Into the Purpose, Intent and Adequacy of the Disability Support Pension, such as allowing evidence of a mental health condition from all registered psychologists.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with a broad range of stakeholders as part of the review, including disability peak bodies, medical professionals, and individuals with lived experience of disability.

More info: [Getting the right medical evidence | DSP Help](#)



COVID-19 vaccination – Disability provider alert 5/4/23

In this update you will find important information relating to:

- ‘Top up your COVID-19 protection’ campaign.
- Resources for people with disability
- In-reach supports
- Text message campaign
- Support for people with disability, providers, carers and families

If you have not heard from your local Primary Health Network (PHN) and you need help to arrange a COVID-19 booster service provider, you can find the contact details of your local PHN [here](#).

For more information see the [disability service providers](#) page on the Department of Health website, along with other resources, recommendations and information about the COVID-19 vaccines.

The Disability Gateway can assist people with disability to find trusted COVID-19 information, support and services. Call the Disability Gateway on 1800 643 787 or visit <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/coronavirus>



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 Locations

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

Central Intake 1800 552 272

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