



Victoria's Australian of the Year

Narungga Kurna woman Janine Mohamed, a pioneer for Indigenous healthcare, has been named Victoria's 2024 Australian of the Year. Ms Mohamed has dedicated her life to fighting racism and improving health outcomes for Australia's Indigenous communities. She has spent the last five years as CEO of the Lowitja Institute, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led community health research organisation based in Melbourne, and before that, she was CEO of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.

Ms Mohamed said her work has involved celebrating excellence in her community, but also has required her to talk about the "tough stuff", which is racism.

"I think we have to understand what racism looks like and feels like and what it produces to be able to vision a different future. "For me, an amazing future would be that everyone is practising cultural safety and anti-racism."



Narungga Kurna woman Janine Mohamed
Picture and article extract -from the ABC News website



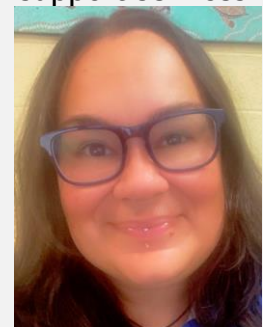
GdA Indigenous Program

This pilot project is about enhancing the knowledge of disability rights and an improved understanding of disability in the community.

Increased understanding of how important it is for families and the community to support and empower people with disabilities.

Enhanced knowledge of the assistance programs offered by GdA to First Nations Communities in our area that house individuals with disabilities.

Enhanced comprehension of the most efficient ways in which GdA interacts with First Nations Communities and in which members of these communities interact and obtain disability support services.



Keiah Meddings-Cooper
GdA Indigenous Advocate

Out and about with the GdA Executive Officer

Ararat's new Inclusive Playground

In December MP for Ripon Martha Haylett attended the official launch of the newly revamped playground funded by Ararat Rural City & the Victorian Govt at Alexandra Gardens. The fabulous new equipment is for all abilities & includes a fully wheelchair accessible liberty swing.



L-R: Ararat Mayor Bob Saunder, GdA Board Member Jo Richie, MP Martha Haylett, GdA EO Roy Reekie (photo Ararat Advocate)

Funding Boost for Disability



L-R: Roy Reekie (GdA EO), Jo Richie (GdA Board Member) Ripon MP Martha Haylett (photo Ararat Advocate)

The Victorian Government has increased its funding of GdA by \$97,500 (36%) ensuring people with disability across Western Victoria have better access to support to exercise their rights. GdA covers communities from Ballan to the border, & from Lake Bolac to Warracknabeal. Get in touch with us for more info. Call 1800 552 272

GdA EO Guest speaker at U3A

Roy Reekie was the Guest Speaker at the 1st UA3 meeting for 2024 held in Ararat at the Aradale site. Roy provided a broad overview of the various types of advocacy that GdA does. He talked about the many changes over the years, how the NDIS has evolved, & its impacts on the past Aradale residents. Many people had some stories to share with Roy.



Roy Reekie (GdA EO) at U3A January meeting at Aradale in Ararat giving a big talk on the importance of GdA in the community (photo Ararat Advocate)

Ten years!!!



Daylesford/Hepburn Shire advocate Kaylene Howell has been with GdA for 10 yrs.

GdA is privileged to have had Kaylene on staff providing advocacy, support and care to people living in the Hepburn and Moorabool shires since January 2014.

Kaylene is highly skilled and experienced. She has a deep understanding of the issues that people with disability can face and an equally deep empathy for her clients. We regularly receive expressions of thanks and acknowledgement from clients whose lives have been changed by Kaylene's support and advocacy for them.

Kaylene is also committed at the community level; relied upon as true giving Daylesford local.

We all love Kaylene.

Movement at the station (Ballarat Station)

For years, local disability advocates, GdA and our Central Highlands Region Advisory Group have been actively agitating and advocating for disability access improvements to Ballarat Railway Station, notably for actual access to platform 2.

The State Government committed to doing something about that within a larger refurbishment of the station as part of its investment into regional communities delivering the now-abandoned 2026 Commonwealth Games. The State Government has since recommitted to acting on the issue despite pulling out of the Commonwealth Games. The funding is still there and secure, it says.

We've all heard this sort of thing before, but this time it's real. Wendouree MP Juliana Addison has been advocating for disability access to be an integral part of plans for the Ballarat Station's redevelopment and for the funding needed for that to be locked in.

Her office has now advised us that Juliana joined the LXR project team to see the initial site investigations underway at Ballarat Station as one of the necessary preliminary steps to progressing the project.

The project is in its initial stages and the project team are drilling around the station precinct to help inform the design and construction program for the upgrades. You might see them and think that they are folk drilling for gold but the gold we want to see is gold standard disability access at the Station, and it looks as though the State Government is well on its way now towards that.

The project is on track to be completed by 2026, providing a boost in accessibility for passengers. It is very pleasing to note that the Ballarat Station Upgrade project is on the Big Build website as that indicates that a project has secure Budget funding and is beyond the planning stage and into the implementation stage. Movement at the station, indeed.



I-PaLS
Independent Pathways and Living Skills

Helps to build social skills for better communication and personal relationships

Some of the things you may get to

LEARN ABOUT

Staying safe in the community
Human rights
Legal rights and tenants rights
How to contribute to community through work and volunteering
How to manage money through goal setting and budgeting
Basic first aid
Cooking on a Budget
Looking after your physical & mental health

Also, guest speakers, outings, games, craft, cooking and other activities

Meeting in Term 1

Ararat

Monday 12.30-3.00pm

Horsham

Wednesday 1.00-3.30pm

Woomelang

Thursday 10.00am-12.30pm

Call GdA on **1800 552 272** for more information

NEW DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER

Australia's new Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Rosemary Kayess, said we need to reframe how Australians think about disability, and address social structures that prevent people with disability from participating equally in society.

Commissioner Kayess said there is a unique opportunity to transform the lives of people with disability following the Disability Royal Commission and the Independent Review into the NDIS. She aims to work with government, stakeholders and the disability community to address ableism and ensure the rights of people with disability in all areas of life.

Commissioner Kayess, who commenced in the role on Monday 29 January, said people with disability are too often viewed through the lens of care, treatment, protection, and service provision.

"People with disability are diverse, with a broad range of interests, dreams and lifestyles, and we should not be defined by a diagnosis or our need for care," Commissioner Kayess said. "People with disability continue to face the community's low expectations and it is imperative that we change this."

Prior to becoming Commissioner, Ms Kayess was a Senior Academic with the Faculty of Law and the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

She was a member of the United Nations drafting committee for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is currently Vice Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and a Visiting Professor at the Centre for Disability, Law and Policy, at the University of Galway.

Commissioner Kayess is a woman with disability who sustained a spinal cord injury in a car accident and uses a wheelchair.

(This is an extract from the DARU Update Feb 2024)

To see an interview with Rosemary Kayess, click on the following link: [Rosemary Kayess provides her first interview as Disability Discrimination Commissioner - ABC News](#)



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
- ❖ Clunes

Central Intake 1800 552 272

admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au
<https://grampiansadvocacy.org.au/>

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