



New Faces at GdA

Introducing the new GdA Executive Officer Peter Harrison



GdA welcomes Peter to the GdA team. He brings a lot of experience from his many years of working with the YMCA in the early education sector and other local community projects. Peter is the current president of the Ballarat YMCA and has been working in Quality Assurance at the Ararat AME Manufacturers for quite a number of years. Peter is also a well-known local musical identity as part of “The Runaway Strings” which also includes his wife.

Pictured below at the Ararat RSL: (L-R) Advocates Phil Cutts, Kaylene Howell, Jo Richie (behind Kaylene), Bern Duane, Acting EO Carol Okai (behind Bern) and Peter Harrison



Important Accreditation Received for GdA

GdA is happy to report that another Service Standard Quality Assurance Audit has been completed. We strive to attain the great results that we receive. Maintaining these important standards is imperative to be able to continue the very best possible advocacy service. Our Advocates are an amazing team of passionate people who ensure that they are up to date with how they can best assist people by continually participating in training and information sessions and following and understanding the latest legislations.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY



Sister Rocks Self Advocacy Group had a fantastic Xmas in July Celebration at the Stawell Neighbourhood House. Everyone participated in the gorgeous set up of the table and decorations, food preparation, games and good spirit and cheer. Thanks Tiffany for doing an amazing job as always, even making sure that Santa had gifts for all. The food and treats so yum!

Pictured Above: Left to Right: Pic 1 Kym & Amy Pic 2 Tiffany and Brooke

Pic Below: L-R: Pic 1 Josh, Tiffany, Amy & Kym standing, Jess, Eveyn, Brooke and Kaye Pic 2 Angie





**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
AUSTRALIA**

Help shape PWDA's submission on National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards

This survey is a chance to share your experiences with health care. Your feedback will help inform our submission to the [Australian Government on the National Safety and Quality Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standards](#).

These are the rules that make sure health care in Australia is safe and good quality. A new version of these rules is being planned for 2028.

You can complete the survey in the window below or click the link to [complete the survey in a new window](#).

Your answers will help us tell the government what needs to change to make health care fairer and more accessible for everyone. If you have the paper version of this newsletter, go to [Have your say on National Safety and Quality Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standards - People with Disability Australia](#)



Save the date

GdA

25th Annual General Meeting

Monday October 20th

2 to 4pm

Being held in Ballarat

Venue to be confirmed

Check our GdA Facebook page for updates

Everyone welcome

Wheelchair Accessible

Afternoon Tea Provided

Guest Speaker New GdA EO

Peter Harrison

Ronan Soussa



We first met car-loving, piano-playing Ronan Soussa when he first graced our screens on Love on the Spectrum.

Ronan was the 2025 Sydney Disability and Workability Expo Ambassador.

Ronan is also the Autism Community Network (CAN) Ambassador

Ronan is a young man who lives with Autism. He is passionate about promoting inclusiveness, advocating for people living with autism and spreading positivity. Ronan doesn't view his autism as a limitation but as a different way of experiencing the world around him.

You can listen to Ronan on the ABC Radio talking about this via the following link:

[Love on the Spectrum's Ronan Soussa on standing up for people with autism - ABC listen](#)




**Regional
Action for
Inclusion through
Self-Advocacy &
Empowerment**

Expressions of Interest

**Expressions
of Interest**



R.A.I.S.E Your Voice is a group that teaches you about human rights and self-advocacy and how to speak up for yourself.
We will support you to use those skills in your community to make change and advocate.
Join the group and see what differences you can make in your community!

**This group is for anyone over 18
There will be up to 8 people in the group
We will meet regularly
You will learn new skills in self-advocacy
It is all Peer-led = You decide what we focus on
It is FREE!**





If interested please reach out to either:

Carol Phone: 0455 226 442 Email: projects@grampiansadvocacy.org.au or
Tiffany Phone: 0436 124 818 Email: tiffany@grampiansadvocacy.org.au

VALID

VALID Open Day 2025

Connect, learn, and celebrate together at VALID Open Day 2025!
People with disability, Families and carers

-  **Powerful speakers** – Hear from advocates, allies, and changemakers.
-  **Video showcases** – See highlights from VALID's projects and stories from our community
-  **Team presentations** – Meet the people behind VALID's programs and learn what we've been working on
-  **Live performances** – Entertainment to inspire and energise
-  **Shared lunch & good vibes** – Enjoy a relaxed meal and connect with others

Date: Thursday 11 September 2025

 **Time:** 10.30am – 3.30pm in Collingwood

Website: valid.org.au

Ph : 9416 4003

New Victorian Disability Advisory Council Announced

The Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC) will help the Victorian Government continue its important work to make the state more inclusive and accessible.

The Victorian Government has appointed a new Victorian Disability Advisory Council. This is the seventh council established since 2007 under the Disability Act 2006.

There are 13 members in the new VDAC. This includes 8 new members and 5 returning members.

The following people make up the council:

- Chris Varney (Chair re-appointee)
- Mija Gwyn (Deputy Chair, re-appointee)
- Husna Amani
- Stella Barton
- Kelly Ann Blake
- Amir Brand-Abdi (re-appointee)
- Bianca Failla
- Helen Freris
- Melissa Hale
- Jen Hargrave (re-appointee)
- Timothy Harte
- Nicole Karidis
- Laura Pettenuzzo (re-appointee).

The VDAC members bring a wide range of lived experience of disability and expertise in inclusion.

The council reflects the diversity of the community and includes a First Nations community member.

The council members were selected from an impressive group of candidates.

The council is appointed for a three-year term, which will end in July 2028. To find out more visit (click below)

[New Victorian Disability Advisory Council announced](#)

AFCA

1800 931 678

Financial hardship is when you are temporarily unable to make a repayment on a debt, such as a credit card, home loan or personal loan.

The causes of financial hardship can include sickness, natural disaster, unemployment or over-commitment to credit arrangements.

The Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA)

can help people in financial hardship sort out disagreements with their bank, mortgage provider or other financial firm.

Making a complaint is free. If you need help, they provide a range of accessibility and support services, including information about our services in different languages.

They provide consumers and small businesses with fair, free and independent dispute resolution for financial complaints.

If you have issues about Credit, Finance & Loans, Insurance, Banking, Deposits and Payments, Insurance & Superannuation, or scammers, the AFCA may be able to assist. Click below.

[Home | Australian Financial Complaints Authority \(AFCA\)](#)

24/7 access to accessible public facilities for people with a disability

The Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK) system is a Master Locksmiths initiative that allows people with disability access to dedicated public facilities. This includes facilities in National Parks and many Council municipalities, elevators at railway stations, the new Changing Places facilities throughout Australia, disabled toilets that are locked, and even the Liberty Swing.

High Security Master Keyed Systems are designed to incorporate a Top-Level Master Key or Grand Master Key that can open all locks on a site, even if different areas have different dedicated keys. It was launched back in 1994 as a joint venture between Pittwater Council, ACROD and the Master Locksmiths Association, before being implemented Nationally.

People with a disability are able to purchase an MLAK key that will open all doors, toilets, playground equipment and other facilities fitted with a lock that uses the special MLAK cylinder. Order by clicking the link below or contacting Master Locksmiths on 9994 1557 or emailing support@masterlocksmiths.com.au

CLICK>> <https://masterlocksmiths.com.au/mlak-order-form>



Victorian Companion Card Holders

The Governments of South Australia and Victoria, in partnership with the Master Locksmiths Association of Australasia, are providing one free Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) to Companion Card holders to support access to Changing Places facilities.

Changing Places toilets are secure and private facilities for people with disability who have high support needs and require additional space and assistance to use a bathroom.

Changing Places include an adult-size, height adjustable change table, a ceiling tracking hoist, and enough room for two people to assist either side of a central toilet. Changes Places are accessed using an MLAK key.

Each Victorian **Companion Card holder** is entitled to **one free MLAK**. To apply, select the button

Master Locksmiths acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government in this initiative.

Click on the link below in the white box to go to the website and apply for the MLAK

**Victorian Companion
Card Holders**

VIC - Claim your free MLAK



The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier of Victoria

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Minister for Disability
Minister for Children

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health

Open Letter to the Victorian Government seeking reversal of the decision to close ParentLine.

Dear Premier and Ministers,

The Victorian public has been made aware via media reporting of Government's intention to cease the provision of ParentLine counselling and support services from October 31, 2025.

Today, more than ever, the vulnerability of children and young people, and the importance of the strength and role of family is at the forefront of the Victorian community's mind. The decision to close ParentLine has been made without consultation, is explained by inaccurate claims of alternative service availability, and comes without an assessment of impact on the health and wellbeing of Victorians.

ParentLine is a low-cost service requiring **less than \$1.5 million** investment from the Victorian Government annually, and if closed will make Victoria the only Australian state or territory not to provide this service.

Community members, service providers, and parenting and family experts disagree that like for like services can be provided by specialist children's support and family violence phonelines, mental health services, or online parenting resources. The decision conflicts with Government's stated policy intentions to reduce family violence, improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and reduce youth crime.

Closure of ParentLine Victoria will have a profound and negative impact on the Victorian community and economy, including but not limited to:

- Missed opportunities to identify and intervene early to prevent adverse health, social, educational outcomes
- Increased demand on limited and high-cost specialist services
- Decreased support for vulnerable Victorians impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, drought, alleged incidents in Victorian childcare centres, and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on education, and
- Unnecessary pressure on Victorian early educators, teachers, and police.

The undersigned call on the Victorian Government to deliver on your commitment to support Victorian families by reversing the decision to close ParentLine and continue to provide this vital free, confidential, anonymous, and universally accessible early intervention and prevention support service.

5 August 2025

C/O: jacinta.allan@parliament.vic.gov.au; lizzie.blandthorn@parliament.vic.gov.au; ingrid.stitt@parliament.vic.gov.au

Click on the following link>>[**Sign your support here.**](#)

NDIS CHANGES YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

From 3 October 2024, participants and their authorised representatives:

- can only spend NDIS funding on things that are in the approved list of NDIS supports
- cannot spend NDIS funding on things in the list of non-NDIS supports.

These lists are available on the NDIS website ([click below](#))

<https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/would-we-fund-it/what-does-ndis-fund>

Eligibility Reassessment

Participants (or nominees) will receive a letter explaining eligibility reassessments and any required information.

Under new laws, we may request specific details, such as:

- A particular type of assessment.
- A report from an allied health professional.

Participants have **90 days** to provide the information, with extensions available if needed.

While no specific requests have been made yet, if we do ask, we will support participants to understand what is needed, why, and by when.

If someone **doesn't** respond within the timeframe or is found ineligible, their NDIS access may be revoked to ensure support is directed where it's needed most.

Mandatory eligibility reassessments will apply in some cases, such as when children turn 9.

For a full list of FAQs relating to legislation changes please visit the [website](#).



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>

Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter or Instagram

