

December 2025

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



New GdA Board of Governance



GdA welcomes its Board of Governance for 2025, pictured L-R: Treasurer Danny Ryan, Dale Edwards, Vice Chairperson Carol Okai, Secretary Matt de Gruchy, new member and past disability advocate Sherree Unwin, Chairperson Norm McMurray and Craig Townsend (Absent - Carly McKinnis)

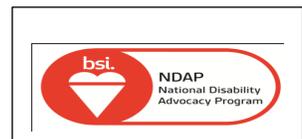
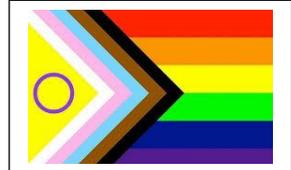
WHAT DOES THIS BOARD HELP GdA TO ACHIEVE & THRIVE FOR?

GdA Vision

An equitable and inclusive society that upholds the rights of people to be empowered and thrive in life

GdA Values

- GdA stands beside people with a disability as they: understand & act on their human rights
- connect and build confidence, independence and friendships
- are empowered to live the life they choose



IMPORTANT CONTACTS FOR PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORTS (24 hours in bold)

SANE (24/7 online forum)	1800 187 263
QLIFE 3pm to midnight	1800 184 527
Lifeline	131114
13YARN	139276
Mensline	1300 789 978
Safe Steps	1800 015 188
Headspace 3-10pm Age 15-25	1800 650 890
Suicide Line	1300 651 251
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
Nurse on Call	1300 606 024
1800 Respect	1800 737 732
Suicide Call Back	1300 659 467
Elder Abuse Hotline	1800 353 374
Men's Referral Service	1300 766 491
Office of the Public Advocate 9am-3pm M-F	1300 309 337

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY IS CELEBRATED EACH YEAR ON DECEMBER 3

In Australia, IDPwD is a joint effort between government, schools, organisations, community groups, businesses and individuals. The Australian Government through the Dept of Health, Disability and Ageing funds a national program and their [website](#) is to help promote and raise awareness of this day. The IDPwD program aligns with [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31](#) and aims to increase public awareness, understanding & acceptance of people with disability. Check the webpage for activities in your local area 😊

Congratulations to this year's Ambassadors

Isabella Choate, Maree Jenner, James Parr, Olivia Sidhu, Ronan Soussa, Santiago Velasquez Hurdato

International Day of
People with Disability



GdA Board and Staff

would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

We wish you all good health and to keep safe in the summer months ahead and in all your travels.



Merry Christmas

Please note that most GdA offices will be closed between December 24th and January the 5th. Some of advocates may be taking a well-earned break for longer than these dates.

We will be happy to address any enquiries or referrals to admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au or messages left on 1800 552 272 upon our return

AGM



Left: New EO Peter Harrison Above: L-R Board Members Craig Townsend, (Ballarat Advocate) Phil Cutts, Bernie & Paul O'Shannessy and Matt de Gruchy Below: attentive listeners



Pic below L-R: GdA Advocate Jackie Gravatt and new GdA Board member Sherree Unwin



Pic below: GdA Advocates L-R: Jo Richie & Jackie Gravatt



Pic below L-R: GdA Chairperson Norm McMurray, MP Juliana Addison and GdA EO Peter Harrison





FROM THE AGM

Pic Below the
GdA Advocates
with Chairperson
Norm McMurray

Left

Kaylene Howell
(11 years)

Right

Bern Duane
(8 years)



Left

Phil Cutts
(5 years)

Right

Jackie Gravatt
(1 year)



Left

Tiffany Kenny
(6 months)

Right

Jo Richie
(6 months)

(Absent)

Trudy Joyce
(13 years)





GdA Chair
Norm McMurray
with Board
Members

Left: Carol Okai
who served as
acting EO for 6
months and now
continues back
on the Board

Right: (retired)
Bernie
O'Shannessy



Left:
Craig Townsend

Right:
Dale Edwards



Left:
Matt de Gruchy

Right:
Danny Ryan

(Absent)
Carly McKinnis



Cash-strapped councils let footpaths fall into disrepair, creating accessibility problems for people with disability

(extract from the ABC October 24 article)



Evelyn Henderson & Kim Hunt are advocating for better accessibility in their local community (pic by Carol Starkey GdA)

For Evelyn Henderson and Kim Hunt, the cracked and uneven footpaths in their country town are more than just an eyesore — they are a problem that stops some residents from getting to where they need to go. “We’ve got a lot of disabled people and elderly people that have fallen over [due to] broken concrete,” Ms Henderson said. “It can be very frustrating when the community is not always accessible.”

Ms Henderson and Ms Hunt have been trying to draw attention to the broken footpaths in their hometown of Stawell. But as cash-strapped councils struggle to keep up with their maintenance and program obligations, the humble footpath is being left behind. For Evelyn Henderson and Kim Hunt, the cracked and uneven footpaths in their country town are more than just an eyesore — they are a problem that stops some residents from getting to where they need to go.

“We’ve got a lot of disabled people and elderly people that have fallen over [due to] broken concrete,” Ms Henderson said.



“It can be very frustrating when the community is not always accessible.” Ms Henderson & Ms Hunt have been trying to draw attention to the broken footpaths in their hometown of Stawell. But as cash-strapped councils struggle to keep up with their maintenance & program obligations, the humble footpath is being left behind.

Ms Henderson & Ms Hunt are members of the RAISE Your Voice advocacy group, a program organised & funded through Grampians Disability Advocacy (GdA).

Together with other advocates from RAISE they have been asking members of the public to tag dodgy footpaths on the Snap, Send & Solve app, creating posters to raise community awareness, & lobbying local councillors.

“We all decided that we wanted our first project to be to get the footpaths fixed,” Ms Hunt said.

Well done Evelyn and Kim, and the community hopes this gets a good result.

New Public Advocate

Dan Stubbs is currently the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner. He was appointed to this role in October 2019. Dan has a disability – and knows first-hand the importance of human rights for people with disability, the reliance people have on disability services & the need to ensure people are supported to be safe & respected. Dan is passionate about the rights & entitlements of people with disability. Previously he worked in the community legal sector as a lawyer & in various leadership roles. He has also worked extensively in developing countries where he led work on disability & human rights. Dan also has a long history of leadership in Australian systemic advocacy organisations of people with disability. Dan holds degrees in Law & Commerce, along with post-graduate qualifications in Development Economics and Legal Practice.



Dan Stubbs pictured with the Hon Maree Edwards MP Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

NEW GdA is pleased to welcome our newest Board of Governance member

Sherree Unwin has dedicated over two decades to nursing, disability support, and advocacy, making significant contributions to the care and empowerment of individuals with disabilities. Her career began as a Registered Nurse Division 2.

Sherree continued her studies gaining her Bachelor of Arts with Majors in Psychology and Anthropology, and a Graduate Diploma of Disability and Inclusion.

Sherree re-entered the workforce as a Disability Support Worker, where she supported individuals with disabilities in accessing community resources and managing complex behaviours. She continued her impactful work at Pinarc, leading group programs and camps for children and adults with diverse disabilities.

Sherree became a Disability Advocate with GdA championing the rights of individuals with disabilities, and supporting clients through complex situations, including family violence and abuse. Sherree has played a significant role in the Disability Royal Commission, helping over 100 clients make submissions. She has built strong community networks, organized events, and delivered educational sessions. Her collaboration with key stakeholders has resulted in systemic submissions that highlight service provision gaps within the child protection system.

Continuously advancing her skills, Sherree completed AUSLAN Levels 1-4 & is currently pursuing a Master of Applied Behavioural Analysis. This advanced education supports her role as a Behaviour Support Practitioner, where she develops & implements effective behaviour support plans for individuals with complex needs.

Sherree's career is a testament to her dedication to the well-being and empowerment of individuals. Her journey from nursing to advocacy and behavioural support, demonstrates her commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of those she serves. With a strong foundation in education and continuous professional development, she continues to inspire and lead in the field of disability support & advocacy.






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



R.A.I.S.E Your Voice

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!

To find out more contact:
 Carol at Grampians disAbility Advocacy
 Phone: 0455 226 442
 Email: projects@grampiansadvocacy.org.au





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 Locations

- ❖ Ararat
- ❖ Horsham
- ❖ Daylesford
- ❖ Ballarat
- ❖ Clunes
- ❖ Golden Plains
- ❖ Bacchus Marsh

& covering the Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees and Moorabool area

Central Intake 1800 552 272
admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au
www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au

