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Grampians needs more volunteers

REGION - The Grampians Region is in need of more Community Visitor volunteers to help protect the rights of people with a disability, according to the Office of the Public Advocate.

The Community Visitors Program, which is run by the Office of the Public Advocate, monitors community residential units for people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, supported residential services and mental health facilities with 24-hour nursing care.

Public advocate, Colleen Pearce said the Community Visitors Program is looking to increase its volunteer numbers in the Grampians region to ensure the rights of people with a disability continue to be monitored by trained volunteers on a regular basis.

"The Community Visitors Program provides the community with a valuable opportunity to get involved with our most vulnerable citizens," she said.

"Community visitors take on a challenging and rewarding role, and make a significant contribution to the promotion and protection of the rights of people with a disability".

Horsham volunteer Sheila Winter has been with the program since 2001.

She said being a community visitor has provided her with an important and rewarding role within the community.

"Our work is to ensure residents and consumers are treated with dignity and respect," Mrs Winter said.

"The work has taught me to think outside the square. To never be surprised by what people with disabilities can achieve and the quality of life they can expect if they are assisted by dedicated, caring staff and to try to influence positive changes where this is not in evidence.

"I believe that the Community Visitors Program allows you to give as much as you feel comfortable with and no more than that."

Mrs Winter's husband, Ross, is also a community visitor.

"I am lucky because my husband Ross became a community visitor shortly after me," she said.

"We quite often visit together and so can freely discuss situations."

Anyone interested in becoming a community visitor volunteer can contact volunteer coordinator Di Cahill on 9603 8339 or at di.cahill@justice.vic.gov.