



Office of the Public Advocate

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 29 October 2009

Public Advocate calls for more volunteers

Public Advocate Colleen Pearce today launched a postcard campaign for more volunteers to help the Office of the Public Advocate defend the rights of vulnerable Victorians.

OPA supports or manages three volunteer programs:

- Community Visitors monitor the standards of care for people with a disability and/or a mental illness
- Independent Third Persons facilitate communication for people with a cognitive disability and/or a mental illness when being formally spoken to by police
- Community Guardians assist people with a cognitive disability when they are unable to make important lifestyle decisions for themselves.

“OPA needs more help in its role as the watchdog for vulnerable Victorians,” Ms Pearce said.

“We currently have approximately 700 volunteers across our three volunteer programs, but there is always a need to fill vacancies in certain localities and when volunteers retire or move on.”

Ms Pearce said OPA was looking for volunteers from all walks of life who were good communicators and committed to standing up for the rights of vulnerable people.

“We have three different types of volunteer opportunities to suit a range of people and to fit in with different time commitments.”

Community Services Minister, Lisa Neville, encouraged people interested in becoming Community Visitors to consider joining the program.

“Community Visitors, funded by the Brumby Labor Government, play an important role in our community by advocating on behalf of people living in disability or mental health facilities, or in supported residential services,” Ms Neville said.

“Having been a Community Visitor, I know that it is a very rewarding role in which you can make a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable Victorians, and I encourage all Victorians to consider getting involved.”

Ms Pearce said all OPA’s volunteer roles have real power to make a difference in the lives of people with a disability. Community Visitors and Community Guardians are backed by legislation and Independent Third Persons by the Victorian Police Manual.

Volunteers are trained and supported by the Office of the Public Advocate.

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