

Contact OPA



Office of the Public Advocate

Community Visitors

Volunteer Community Visitors make unannounced visits to disability accommodation services, supported residential services and mental health facilities in Victoria.

They report on the wellbeing of residents and patients and whether their rights are being respected. They raise issues of concern with service managers, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Public Advocate. They can also visit these facilities on request.

Independent Third Persons

Independent Third Persons (ITPs) are volunteers trained by OPA to attend Victoria Police interviews of victims, witnesses and alleged offenders with disability or mental illness.

Victoria Police arranges for an ITP to attend the interview to ensure the person understands their rights. The ITP assists by facilitating communication and supporting the person during the interview.

Corrections Independent Support Officers (CISO) are experienced ITPs who support Victorian prisoners with a diagnosed intellectual disability during disciplinary hearings.



Office of the
Public Advocate

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Level 1, 204 Lygon Street Carlton,
Victoria 3053

Phone: 1300 309 337

TTY: 1300 305 612

National Relay Service: 133 677

Fax: 1300 787 510

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Visit OPA's website for more information about its services, volunteering opportunities, research, information about the law, and news from the Public Advocate.

Safeguarding
the rights and
interests of people
with disability

About OPA



The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) is an independent statutory body that safeguards the rights and interests of people with disability in Victoria.

Victoria's Public Advocate, Colleen Pearce, leads OPA staff and more than 650 volunteers as they work to eliminate abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

OPA assists people with disability, their families, carers, and supporters, by providing advice, education, information, human rights monitoring, guardianship and systemic advocacy.

Disability includes intellectual, psychiatric, sensory and neurological disabilities, dementia, acquired brain injury and physical disabilities affecting communication.



OPA's logo represents code flag F of the International Flag Code, which means 'I am disabled, communicate with me'. It was chosen as OPA's logo by the first Public Advocate, Ben Bodna, in 1987.

OPA's services

Advice and response

OPA's Advice Service provides information on the rights of people with disability, and matters that may affect people with disability, including:

- guardianship and administration
- enduring powers of attorney
- medical decisions
- referral to OPA's Community Visitors Program.

OPA's Advice Service is available from 9am to 4.45pm on weekdays.

Phone: 1300 309 337

TTY: 1300 305 612

National Relay Service: 133 677

Email: OPA_Advice@justice.vic.gov.au

Education and publications

OPA holds public and professional education sessions on future planning, medical decision-making, guardianship and administration, and less restrictive options for people with disability.

Publications on these topics can be downloaded from OPA's website at www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au, or ordered from Victoria Legal Aid at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au.

Advocacy, guardianship and investigations

In some circumstances, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) can appoint the Public Advocate as guardian for an adult with disability.

The Public Advocate delegates this power to an OPA Advocate Guardian or a trained volunteer Community Guardian, who advocates for and makes decisions in the best interests of the person with disability.

In addition, OPA conducts investigations for VCAT if a person with disability is at risk and a guardianship order may be needed. OPA also endeavors to provide direct advocacy for people with disability who have no other advocacy options available.

OPA values

Respect

Compassion

Integrity

Rights

Independence

