

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

STRATEGIC PLAN



2018–
2022



Office of the
Public Advocate



SUPPORTING PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITY AND
MENTAL ILLNESS TO
PROMOTE AND PROTECT
THEIR RIGHTS

Strategic Plan 2018–2022

Produced by the Office of the Public Advocate

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WELCOME

PUBLIC ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

THIS STRATEGIC PLAN SETS THE OFFICE'S VISION FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, AND IN DOING SO TAKES ACCOUNT OF A SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGING DISABILITY SERVICES ENVIRONMENT.

The plan recognises and draws on a number of recent developments.

These include, among other things:

- legislative changes
- the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- the growing awareness of the incidence of elder abuse
- our improved awareness of how the human rights of people with disability can best be realised in our work.

The plan outlines how we plan to concentrate our activities, and deliver our services, in a way that both meets our core statutory responsibilities, and the expectations of all Victorians, including Victorians with disability.

Colleen Pearce

Colleen Pearce
Public Advocate





OPA'S PASSIONATE AND
ENERGETIC STAFF TIRELESSLY
FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF
VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITY
OR MENTAL ILLNESS.



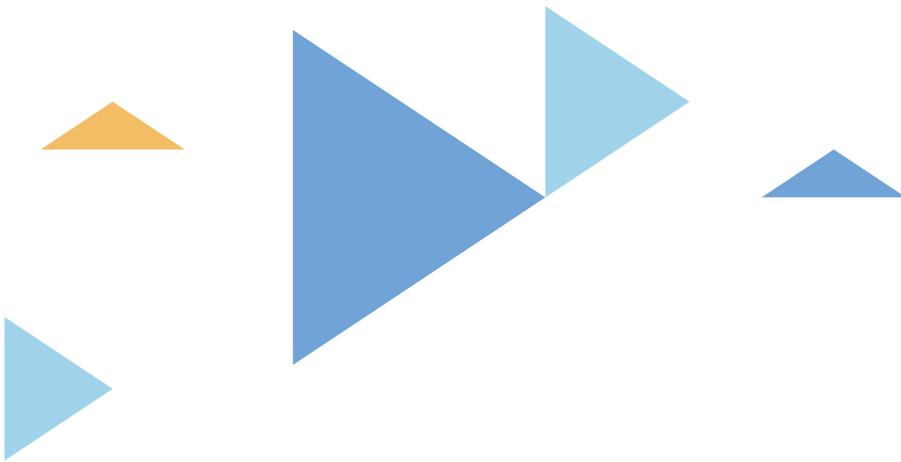
What drives us?

We support people with disability and people with mental illness to promote and protect their rights.



What do we want?

A fair and inclusive society that respects and values the human rights and dignity of all people, including people with disability and people with mental illness.



OUR STRATEGIC INTENT



How will we work to achieve this?

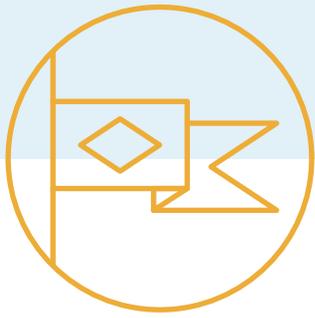
1. Delivering rights-informed guardianship, medical treatment decision-making and advocacy.
2. Identifying and embedding supported decision-making practices to enable people to have the greatest role possible in making decisions that affect them.
3. Enabling volunteers to monitor and advocate for the human rights and social inclusion of people with disability and people with mental illness.
4. Providing accessible information, advice, and community education, on guardianship, advance planning, medical consent, supported decision-making, the NDIS, and other topics relevant to the lives of people with disability and people with mental illness.
5. Advocating for evidence-informed policy, service and legal reforms that protect and promote the human rights of people with disability and people with mental illness, especially in the fields of criminal justice, elder abuse, the NDIS and supported decision-making.



Our values

We are an organisation that draws on the expertise and commitment of staff and volunteers, who share these values:

1. We treat all people with **respect** and **compassion**. We care about people and recognise our shared humanity
2. We act honestly, transparently and with **integrity**, and take responsibility for our actions.
3. We fearlessly promote the **rights** of people with disability and people with mental illness, and in doing so ensure our **independence**.



OUR PLAN

OUR OFFICE

THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE IS AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY ENTITY, CONSISTING OF PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS, WHICH HAS A RANGE OF LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FIELDS OF GUARDIANSHIP, INVESTIGATIONS, MEDICAL TREATMENT DECISION-MAKING, DISABILITY, MENTAL HEALTH AND OTHER DISABILITY-RELATED AREAS.



Our core roles

1. Act as guardian when appointed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
2. Conduct investigations at the request of VCAT
3. Make significant medical treatment decisions for people who have no Medical Treatment Decision Maker
4. Advocate on behalf of people with disability and people with mental illness who are at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect
5. Produce accessible information and community education on topics relevant to people with disability and people with mental illness
6. Provide a responsive and informative Advice Service
7. Advocate for policy, legislative and service reforms that will promote and protect the human rights of people with disability and people with mental illness
8. Deliver volunteer programs that monitor, support, and advocate for the rights and social inclusion of people with disability and people with mental illness, including the Community Visitors Program, the Independent Third Person Program, the Corrections Independent Support Officer Program and the Community Guardianship Program
9. Provide high quality legal, financial, information technology, records management and human resources services to enable these functions to be performed.



OUR DELIVERY OF THE PLAN .



ONE: PEOPLE WE WORK WITH



IN PERFORMING OUR GUARDIANSHIP,
INVESTIGATION, ADVOCACY AND
MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING ROLES,

WE WILL :

1. explore ways of supporting the people we work with to make their own decisions
2. wherever possible identify and record the will, values and preferences of the people we work with
3. make decisions and, in our investigations and advocacy work, promote outcomes that accord with the will, values and preferences (where they are known) of the people concerned, unless doing so would place them at unreasonable risk of significant harm.

IN ALL OUR PROGRAM AREAS,

WE WILL :

1. ensure that our roles are exercised in a manner accessible to all Victorians through development of a Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which will consist of:
 - a. implementation and renewal of our Koori Inclusion Action Plan, Cultural Diversity Plan and Disability Action Plan, and
 - b. development of an LGBTI Action Plan
2. provide information and advice in a range of accessible formats, including through usage of interpreters and translated materials, and through usage of accessible English (including plain English, simple English and Easy English)
3. strengthen opportunities for the people we work with, and those close to them, to detail their views about, and experiences of, the way we perform our roles, and draw on this feedback in improving what we do
4. ensure that all complaints are handled sensitively and fairly, and are drawn on by us, where appropriate, to improve what we do.

TWO :

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS



WE WILL :

1. initiate and promote opportunities for all staff and volunteers in our various program areas to identify as members of the one unified organisation. To do this we will:
 - a. provide increased opportunities for staff and volunteers from all program areas to come together to share their knowledge and expertise, including through the holding of an OPA Conference once every two years (which incorporates a future planning element) and a Volunteers Conference once every two years
 - b. hold quarterly all-staff meetings, to which volunteer representatives are invited
 - c. explore the possibility of having a volunteer representative on an OPA leadership committee
 - d. explore the possibility of developing a generic element of the orientation programs for new staff and volunteers that can be delivered jointly to new staff and volunteers
2. promote an active leadership culture. To do this we will:
 - a. maintain at the executive leadership level an Operations Committee and a more broadly constituted Strategy Committee
 - b. identify and encourage emerging leaders
 - c. hold quarterly 'OPA Leadership' forums involving all staff supervisors
3. coordinate comprehensive induction and orientation programs for new staff members and volunteers
4. provide high quality core skills training for all staff and volunteers
5. provide opportunities for staff professional development through creation of a Learning and Development Framework
6. monitor the extent to which our support for our volunteers meets the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, and take remedial action where necessary
7. strengthen opportunities for staff and volunteers to express their views about our operations, and draw on these views in improving what we do
8. ensure that health, safety and wellbeing policies are robust, current and accessible.

THREE : OUR COMMUNICATION GOALS



WE WILL :

1. provide a high quality and responsive advice service
2. produce and provide to targetted audiences high quality information and community education on topics that help people to navigate service systems and laws affecting people with disability and people with mental illness
3. concentrate our communication and community education activities in these areas:
 - a. prevention of, and responses to, violence against people with disability and people with mental illness
 - b. advance planning, including the appointment of enduring representatives (under enduring powers of attorney and comparable instruments) and the creation of advance directives
 - c. medical consent
 - d. guardianship and administration
 - e. supported decision-making
 - f. NDIS decision-making
4. utilise a range of traditional and online platforms in publicising our reform goals.

FOUR : OUR REFORM GOALS



WE WILL :

1. initiate and draw on research, and engage in targeted, evidence-informed systemic advocacy that seeks to:
 - a. lessen the involvement of people with disability and people with mental illness in the criminal justice system
 - b. identify ways that OPA can continue, and expand, its safeguarding role in the context of a changing adult safeguarding environment
 - c. improve the operation of the NDIS so that:
 - its goal of radically transforming the lives of people with disability can be realised
 - all participants are involved in making the decisions that affect them
 - d. improve elder abuse prevention and response strategies
 - e. maximise the ability of parents with disability and parents with mental illness to care for their children
 - f. drive supported decision-making practice reforms and resource developments
 - g. promote legal and policy reforms that enable and encourage supported decision-making developments
 - h. identify, and propose solutions to, service and regulatory gaps that significantly affect the lives of people with disability and people with mental illness
2. liaise with, and partner where appropriate, other organisations in seeking our reform goals, where the reform goals of those organisations align with ours.

FIVE : OUR OPERATIONS

5



WE WILL :

1. ensure that OPA develops and maintains a diverse staffing and volunteer profile that is representative of the community we serve
2. ensure that our staff and volunteers are well-supported to perform their roles with legal, financial, IT, records management and human resources services
3. ensure that our staff and volunteers observe integrity, privacy and confidentiality requirements, including through developing and making available relevant policies and operational guidelines, and through conducting regular audits
4. monitor the performance of all program areas at monthly Operations Committee meetings, utilising among other materials, a monthly performance scorecard
5. monitor the quality and consistency of our work in complex and high-risk situations through quarterly meetings of the Serious Cases Review Committee
6. drive the realisation of our strategic goals, and the implementation of this plan, through monthly Strategy Committee meetings
7. reduce our environmental footprint by adopting paperless business practices wherever feasible
8. develop and implement a strategic transformation plan that enables OPA to meet our expanding range of responsibilities and the needs of the people we work with. To do this we will:
 - a. identify improvements that we can make to the way we exercise our responsibilities, drawing on, among other things, the views of the people we work with
 - b. identify ways in which technological developments can assist us in our work
 - c. identify and promote the greater usage of modern flexible working arrangements (while ensuring maintenance of high service and integrity standards)
 - d. explore the feasibility of opening a satellite office to enable us to be nearer to the people for whom we are guardian
9. report on the activities of the office, and of the Community Visitors Program, through production of high quality annual reports.



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