

# PWDA Client handbook: Information about using PWDA's services

April 2024



**pwda**

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY  
AUSTRALIA**

# Introduction

This handbook gives you information about PWDA and the services we provide.

To help decide what people with disability need to know, we talked with past and present clients.

We would like to thank those clients who took the time and care to talk with us about the handbook.

Your invaluable input is much appreciated!



**People with Disability Australia (PWDA)** is a national disability rights organisation. We are made up of, led and governed by people with disability. We represent the interests of all people with disability in Australia.

As a designated '**Disabled People's Organisation**,' PWDA stands up for the rights of people with disability. This includes monitoring and reporting on Australia's compliance with the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.

You can join us by becoming a member (see the section 'becoming a member' for how to join).

Our aim is to ensure all people with disability can live their best lives, in the community.

- We recognise the strengths of people with disability and their right to self-determination.
- We assist people with disability to access information, services, and other supports.
- We educate people with disability about what to do if their rights are breached.
- We provide issue-based, short-term individual advocacy to people with disability.
- We talk with government about laws and policies that impact people with disability.

We are a non-profit, non-government organisation. Funding for our organisation comes from the government and from individual, corporate and philanthropic donors.

# What we believe

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** states that every human being is 'born free and equal in dignity and rights (Art.1).' This bedrock principle is enshrined throughout the CRPD, which guides all PWDA's work in the disability space.

## PWDA's values are based on human rights

We believe people with disability, irrespective of age, gender, cultural or linguistic background, geographic location, sexuality, or the nature, origin, or degree of disability, are entitled to:

- choice and control over their own lives
- secure income and a good standard of living
- equitable access to housing, health, education
- reasonable adjustments to promote full inclusion
- freedom from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation

- freedom from discrimination, harassment, and vilification
- participation in all aspects of the community (social, intellectual, cultural, economic, etc.)
- participation in the creation and review of laws and policies that affect people with disability
- support to exercise their rights, including through the provision of legal and non-legal advocacy.

No one can take these rights away from you. If you are ever stopped from enjoying them, talk to PWDA about what we can do to support you to advocate for your rights.

Watch **our video about our values and vision in Auslan** on our website.



# What is advocacy?

The term 'advocacy' means standing up for someone's rights. Advocacy can be supporting one person resolve a problem or speaking up about an issue that is impacting many people. In both instances, the goal is to create positive change for people with disability.

## Our advocacy

### Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself and your rights. PWDA can give you support and training to advocate for yourself. Some people describe this as 'standing behind' you.

### Individual advocacy

PWDA also works alongside people with disability to advocate for their human rights and to solve problems they are experiencing. This can be described as 'standing beside' or 'walking with' you.

### Systemic advocacy

Systemic advocacy seeks to address barriers in society which cause lots of people with disability to experience problems. This can prevent further problems for people with disability as a group, rather than just helping one person at a time. This is sometimes described as 'standing before' you.



# Is PWDA right for me?

Do you have a problem you can't solve on your own? Read this section to see if PWDA can help. If you're still not sure, you can contact PWDA to check.



## Who can use PWDA advocacy support services

We see people who are:

- ✓ any age
- ✓ non-members and members of PWDA.

We may be able to offer you advocacy support if:

- ✓ you live in NSW or QLD
- ✓ you identify as having a disability (of any type)
- ✓ you are seeking help for someone with a disability (who lives in NSW or QLD).



# Is PWDA right for me?

(continued)

## What PWDA can and can't do

| Things our advocates can do   | Things our advocates can't do   |
|---|---|
| <p>We provide short-term, issue-based individual advocacy for people with disability across a broad range of matters, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NDIS reviews and appeals</li><li>• Child protection concerns</li><li>• Discrimination, harassment</li><li>• Complaints about service providers</li><li>• Complaints about government departments</li><li>• Guardianship, financial management orders</li><li>• Violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation.</li></ul> | <p>We can't provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Counselling</li><li>• Legal advice</li><li>• Case management</li><li>• Crisis intervention</li></ul> |

We also support people with disability engage with the National Redress Scheme and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

# Getting help from PWDA

## Help to communicate with PWDA

If you would like help to talk to us, you can ask one of the following:

- a support person, for example, a family member, friend, or service provider
- an interpreter, for example, Translating and Interpreting Service (Phone 131 450)
- National Relay Service (Phone 1300 555 727)
- or other preferred communication method.

PWDA can also help organise an interpreter with you.



# Getting help from PWDA

(continued)



## How to request advocacy from PWDA

| How to  | Next steps  |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Contact PWDA by one of these ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>fill in the Information Request form on the PWDA website or <a href="#">here</a>, or at <a href="https://pwda.smartersoft.io/intakeform">https://pwda.smartersoft.io/intakeform</a></li><li>phone: 1800 422 015.</li></ul>                     | <p>When you submit your PWDA Information Request form, you will see the following message on your screen:</p> <p>Thank you for making contact. We will get back to you shortly.</p> |
| <p>2. Wait for PWDA to contact you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We will contact you via your preferred contact and discuss the issue with you.</li><li>We may be able to give you information or a referral.</li><li>We might need to contact you further about what kind of advocacy you are asking for.</li></ul> | <p>You will be contacted by PWDA intake <b>within 3 business days</b>.</p>  |
| <p>3. Wait for PWDA to tell you what kind of advocacy, information, or referral we can offer you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Remember, not everyone gets an advocate. It depends on the kind of issue you have. It needs to be solvable through advocacy.</li></ul>  | <p>Once we understand what support you need, we can give you more details about what to expect. Sometimes we can even tell you straight away.</p>                                   |



# Getting help from PWDA

(continued)

## Working with an advocate

| How to   | Next steps   |
|--|--|
| 1. If we determine that you need our support, an advocate will contact you to introduce themselves, and arrange a first meeting.   | You will meet when you are both available - this may not be immediately. This can be done face-to-face, online, or by phone. Please advise us of your preference.                |
| 2. In your first meeting, you and your advocate will talk more about your issue. You will also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discuss in detail what you want to happen</li><li>• make an action plan for how to work towards your goals</li><li>• talk about the advocacy tasks</li><li>• discuss and complete the consent form</li><li>• discuss the requirements of our funding agreements.</li></ul> | If your choice is to meet face-to-face, we will work with you to make sure you can meet in a safe and private space. Please advise your advocate if you need support to do this. |
| 3. Working towards achieving your goals.   | You and your advocate will decide together when, where and how often to meet with each other.  |

# Getting help from PWDA

(continued)



| How to  | Next steps  |
|---|---|
| <p>4. Once advocacy support is no longer needed as part of your action plan, we will close your file.</p> <p>Some examples of why we will close your file are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• you are successful in achieving your goal</li><li>• we are unable to contact you (3 times over 3 weeks)</li><li>• all reasonable avenues are exhausted.</li></ul> <p><b>Note</b><br/>If there is a strong chance your matter will not be successful, we will discuss other alternatives with you, but we will not be able to provide advocacy.</p> | <p>Remember, PWDA provides short-term, issue-based advocacy.</p> <p>As we do not 'case manage' our clients, if any other issues arise, you can contact us again. You will need to undertake the same process discussed above. You may not be allocated the same advocate. All our advocates are skilled and able to help.</p> |

# Rights and responsibilities

## Your rights

- to be safe when using PWDA services, and be treated fairly and respectfully
- to be provided all the information you need to make your own decisions
- to have access to interpreting/ communication aids
- to make your own decisions about your goals and advocacy support
- to be able to tell PWDA how you feel about our service, without being afraid
- to receive service which meets the **National Standards for Disability Services** (<https://bit.ly/39CO4C5>)
- to access information we have collected about you (in your file).

## Your responsibilities

- to treat your advocate and all PWDA staff with respect
- to help your advocate by giving them all the information you have about your case/issue
- to understand that an advocate is not a counsellor, lawyer, or mediator
- to make an action plan with your advocate; and to talk about what things you need to do and what your advocate needs to do
- to let your advocate know if you can't make an appointment.

# PWDA contact details

**To request advocacy from PWDA**  
(NSW and QLD)

## **The main office in Sydney**

**Office hours:** 9am – 5pm Mon – Fri

We are close to Central Station.



**Phone (toll free):** 1800 422 015

**PWDA Information Request  
Form:** [https://  
pwda.smartersoft.io/intakeform](https://pwda.smartersoft.io/intakeform)

## **Our phone numbers**

**Phone (toll free):** 1800 422 015

**Phone:** 02 8365 0400

**Telephone typewriter:** 02 9318 2138

**Toll free TTY:** 1800 422 016

**Our email:** [pwd@pwd.org.au](mailto:pwd@pwd.org.au)

## **Our postal address**

PO Box 666  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Australia

## **Our street address**

Suite 10.01,  
Centennial Plaza  
Level 10, 300 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



# PWDA contact details

(continued)

## Regional services

- Logan
- Sunshine Coast
- Bundaberg
- Mt Isa
- Fraser Coast
- Bowral
- Queanbeyan
- NSW South Coast

## Outreach services

- Longreach
- Mossman
- Port Douglas
- Far North Queensland.

Phone (toll free): 1800 422 015

PWDA Information Request Form:  
<https://pwda.smartersoft.io/inforequest>



# Privacy and confidentiality

PWDA recognises and respects the right of all its clients to privacy. Our policies and procedures are designed to protect the confidentiality of any personal information you share with us.

You can access our full [privacy policy](#) on our website.



## How we collect and manage your personal information

All the personal information PWDA keeps about its clients is stored on a secure server. If you ever have any concerns about how we collect and manage your personal information, please talk with your advocate.

### Consent to store

To provide advocacy, we need to collect and store some of your personal information. To do this, we will ask you for your permission. We will talk to you about this in your first conversation. This gives PWDA permission to store your personal information.

We cannot provide service without you giving us 'mandatory' personal information. This is because government requires us to collect and report on data that shows we are doing our job. This data is sent to government but does not contain your name, address, or any other identifying details.

## Consent to share

We usually need to talk with other people (doctors, government, services, etc.) about your issue. We will ask you to sign a consent form, giving us permission to talk with them. This 'consent' remains in place for up to 12 months. You can withdraw or change your consent, at any time.

### If you don't consent to store or share

You can refuse to let us store your information, or share your information with other people, but this might stop us from being able to help you.

### Situations when we can't keep your information private

You need to know that there are some situations where we must share your information. These are:

- when ordered to by a court
- when there is risk of harm to a child
- when there is a risk of harm to any other person, including you.

# Privacy and confidentiality

(continued)

## Reporting to the government

All disability advocacy and support services in Australia must report certain information to the Australian Government. When we send this data, it does not contain any information which could identify you, personally. It is called 'SCORE' data.

The Government uses this information to work out if PWDA is doing a good job. It is important to PWDA to collect and report on this data, as our future funding depends on it.

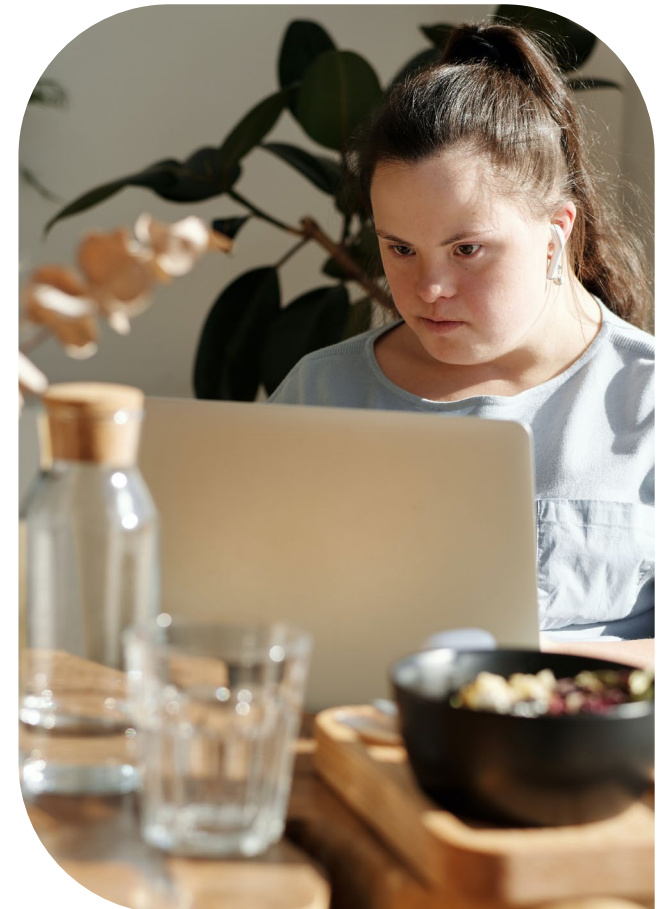
SCORE stands for Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting. This information helps tell the story of what we achieve together. To do this, we collect SCORE data at the beginning and end of our advocacy support, with you.

You can complete SCORE data on your own, or with the assistance of your advocate.

## About your PWDA file

You have the right to see your PWDA file. This will usually take some time – it can't happen immediately.

To see your file, you can talk to your advocate or call PWDA. Please note, we keep files for 7 years.



# How to provide feedback about PWDA services

If you are not happy with the advocacy you received from PWDA, you can tell us. PWDA respects the right of every client to make a complaint about our service. You will not be treated differently, or refused service, if you make a complaint.

For more details see [the PWDA website page about making a complaint](#).



## 1. Tell PWDA what you are not happy about.

If you don't want to talk to your advocate, then you can ask to speak with their manager.

You can:

- have a support person assist you
- use interpreting or accessibility services
- make a complaint anonymously, but it will make it more difficult (or not possible) for the issue to be investigated.

## 2. PWDA investigates and tells you what we found.

PWDA will try to find out what has happened. To do this they will talk to you further, and to any staff who are involved.

## 3. If you are not happy with the outcome

You can tell PWDA and appeal the decision.

You can also make a complaint about our advocacy support to the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS);

- Phone: 1800 880 052 (toll free).
- 1800 555 677 (National Relay Service)
- 13 14 50 (Translating and Interpreting Service).





# Becoming a member of PWDA

Becoming a member of PWDA is a way of standing up for the rights of people with disability.

## Members help make PWDA stronger. They:

- support us to work for human rights, citizenship, and social justice for people with disability
- can influence PWDA's public policy positions and program development
- can vote in board elections.

## If you become a PWDA member, we will:

- tell you about changes to laws or government help, or the NDIS
- tell you about major issues affecting people with disability
- invite you to meetings, and membership events and activities.

Individual membership is open to anyone over 18 years old with disability living in Australia. It is free for individuals to join.

We keep some personal details of members (name and contact details). We keep this information securely.

You can watch [our video about membership in Auslan](#) on our website.

Or, you can read about [becoming a member in easy read](#) on our website.



# How to become an individual member

## 1. Get a membership form by one of the following:

- a. **download a form** from our website
- b. **complete the form online**
- c. email us and ask for a membership form.  
You can ask for a form in a different format too.

## 2. Do the paperwork.

- a. Check that you are ok with the **privacy policy** and **membership prospectus**.
- b. Fill the form in.

## 3. Return the completed form to PWDA:

- a. mail a hardcopy to our postal address
- b. if completing the online form, click the blue 'submit' button at the bottom
- c. email your completed Word or PDF form to us.

# Other places to get help

## National services

- **Lifeline Crisis Support**  
Phone 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days) or chat online (7 pm – midnight/7 nights)
- **Suicide Call Back Service**  
Phone 1300 659 467 or visit the **Suicide Call Back Service** website (<https://bit.ly/3O2mE7J>)
- **1800RESPECT**  
Phone 1800 737 732 or chat online (both 24 hours/7 days)
- **Blue Knot Foundation**  
Phone 1800 421 468 between 9 am and 6 pm AEST Mon-Fri and 9 am to 5 pm AEST weekends and public holidays
- **Beyond Blue Support Service**  
Phone 1300 224 636 (24 hours/7 days), chat online (3 pm to 12 am AEST/7 days)
- **Mensline**  
Phone 1300 789 978
- **Kids Helpline**  
Phone 1800 551 800
- **First People's Disability Network**  
Phone +61 (2) 9267 4195 or email [enquiries@fpdn.org.au](mailto:enquiries@fpdn.org.au)
- **Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline**  
Phone 1800 019 123
- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**  
Phone 1800 035 544 or complete a **complaint contact form** (<https://bit.ly/3b3sabr>)
- **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service**  
Phone 1800 880 052
- **National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline**  
Phone 1800 880 052
- **Information on Disability Education and Awareness Services (IDEAS)**  
Phone 1800 029 904
- **QLIFE**  
3pm-midnight, every day  
Phone 1800 184 527,  
Webchat [www.qlife.org.au](http://www.qlife.org.au)



# Other places to get help

(continued)

## QLD services

- **QLD Ombudsman**  
Phone 07 3005 7000
- **QLD Human Rights Commission**  
Phone 1300 130 670 or visit the **QLD HRC website ([www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/contactus](http://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/contactus))** for a full list of ways to contact
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland**  
Phone 1800 718 969
- **Queensland Community Support Scheme (Community access point)**  
Phone 1800 600 300

## NSW services

- **NSW Ombudsman**  
Phone 1800 451 524
- **NSW Ageing & Disability Commission**  
Phone 1800 628 221
- **NSW Healthcare Complaints Commission**  
Phone 1800 043 159
- **Anti-Discrimination NSW**  
Phone 1800 670 812 or visit the **Anti-Discrimination NSW** website for a full list of ways to contact **[www.antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au](http://www.antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au)**