

Client Service Guide

September 2023

This document can be provided in alternate formats or languages upon request.

Independent ~ Local ~ Free



Introduction

What is this guide for?

This guide provides you with information about Regional Disability Advocacy Service Ltd (RDAS), the services we provide, and how we provide them.

It will be made available to you in other formats and languages upon request.

Who is Regional Disability Advocacy Service?

Regional Disability Advocacy Service Ltd (RDAS) is a non-government, not-for-profit, charitable organisation. We are funded by the Victorian and Federal Governments to provide advocacy support to people with disability throughout North-East Victoria and Southern NSW.

RDAS is a disability rights organisation. Our mission is to empower, inform and advocate for people with disability so they can live the life they choose.

RDAS stands up for the rights of people with disability, following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (CRPD).



RDAS aims to ensure all people with disability can live their best lives in the community. We do this by:

- Providing issue-based, short-term individual advocacy to people with disability and their families/carers.
- Recognising the strengths of people with disability and their right to self-determination.
- Helping people with disability to access information about rights, services and available supports.
- Providing education for people with disability about what they can do if their rights are not respected.
- Talking to government about laws and policies that affect people with disability.

RDAS is funded to provide independent free advocacy services. We are independent from other services and government agencies.

No one except you can tell RDAS how to act when advocating for you.

We act only in your best interest and with your authority.

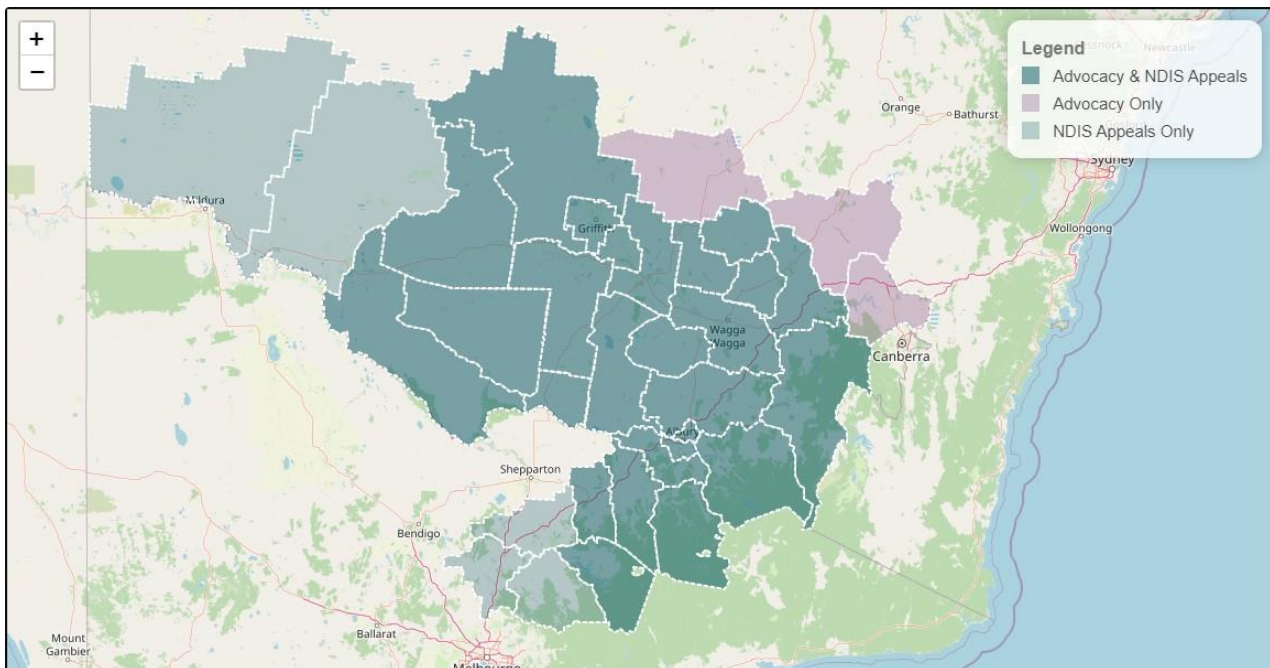
Who can use RDAS?

RDAS can work with people who:

- Are any age and have disability
- Live within the RDAS service area (see map on next page)
- Have a human rights based issue

It is important to note that we can also support family members and carers of people with disability.

Our service region covers North East Victoria and Southern NSW.



What is Advocacy?

Disability advocacy is about your human rights. Advocacy makes sure all your rights are protected, by giving you a voice, so you can live your life fully.

Advocacy is speaking or acting on someone else's behalf to ensure that their rights are upheld.

Advocacy can be supporting one person to resolve a problem or speak up about an issue that is impacting many people.

We work with clients to resolve issues or concerns that they have not been able to resolve themselves. In these situations, the goal is to achieve positive outcomes for people with disability.



What RDAS can and can't provide

WE CAN HELP WITH:

- Short-term, issue-based advocacy for individuals with disability
- NDIS reviews and appeals
- Access and rights issues relating to education and employment
- Discrimination and harrassment issues
- Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation issues
- Complaints about service providers and businesses
- Complaints about government departments
- Challenging guardianship and/or financial management orders
- Access and rights relating to Child Protection interventions



WE CAN'T HELP WITH:

- Counselling
- Legal advice
- Financial advice
- Medical advice
- Case management
- Crisis intervention
- Choosing, finding or recommending service providers or medical professionals
- Mediation



Advocacy Services

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself and your rights. We can support you and provide training to advocate for yourself.

RDAS runs a program called Self Advocacy Inclusive Learning Sessions (SAILS) throughout the region. SAILS holds monthly sessions for small groups of people with disability, working on skills to:

- Develop confidence to speak up/stand up for yourself
- Clearly explain your needs
- Know your rights
- Make informed decisions



For further information about SAILS, refer to the RDAS website.

Individual Advocacy

Individual Advocacy is where a professional Advocate works with you to help you address an issue of discrimination, abuse or neglect.

The Advocate will support you by acting alongside you or on your behalf.

Systemic Advocacy

Systemic Advocacy is where RDAS works with all levels of government to make changes to laws and policies which cause people with disability to experience issues with their rights.



Community Education

RDAS staff are regularly involved in our community networks to champion the rights of people with disability.

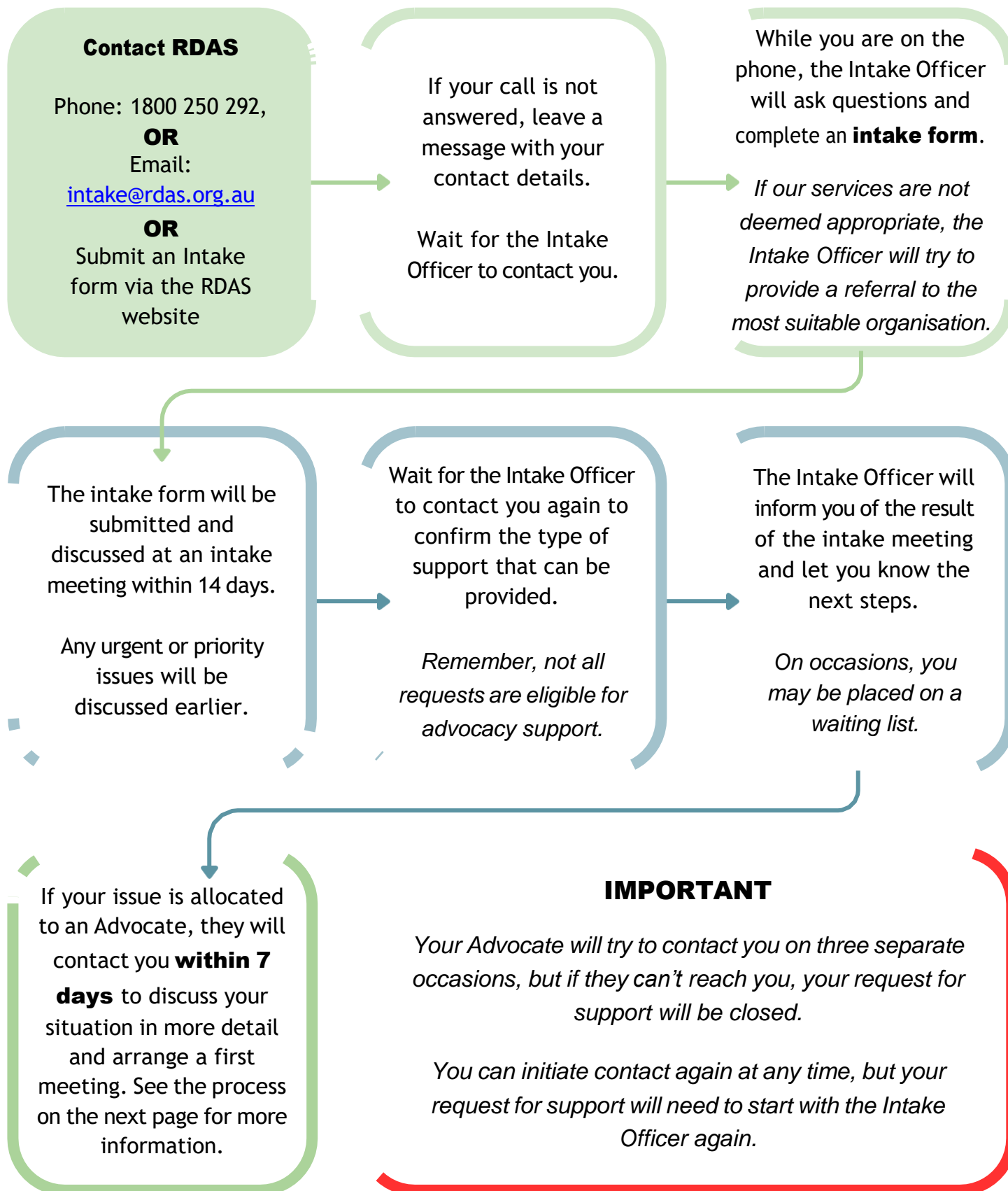


The team is available to:

- Facilitate and participate in community forums
- Deliver presentations at schools, TAFEs and universities
- Deliver education and training sessions for workplaces
- Develop newsletters and media content

Getting help from RDAS: How it works

When you first need help



Working with your Advocate



IMPORTANT

All reasonable efforts will be made to achieve the stated goals in a client's action plan. When an advocate and client agree to cease the service and close the file, the client will be sent a letter to confirm this.

If the client changes their mind about closing the file, they have 14 days to request it remains open.

Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to:

- Be safe when using RDAS services
- Be treated fairly and respectfully
- Have your privacy protected
- Be provided with all the information you need to make your decisions
- Make your own decisions about your goals and Advocacy support
- Provide RDAS with feedback
- Receive services which meet the National Standards for Disability Services
- Access information collected by RDAS about you in your file

You have the responsibility to:

- Treat your Advocate and RDAS staff with respect
- Provide true and correct information
- Help your Advocate by giving them all the information you have about your issue
- Understand that an Advocate is not a counsellor, lawyer or mediator
- Participate in the advocacy process by:
 - completing an action plan with your Advocate
 - completing agreed tasks
 - attending appointments and maintaining contact
- If you are not able to make an appointment, providing as much notice as possible

IMPORTANT - If your Advocate tries contacting you more than three times without success, RDAS reserves the right to close your file. You can initiate contact any time but will need to start with the Intake Officer again.

Privacy and confidentiality

RDAS recognises and respects the right of all service users to privacy, dignity and confidentiality.



We have policies and procedures that are designed to protect the confidentiality of any personal information you share.

Your information is stored in a database on a secure server that is password protected and accessed only by the appropriate staff.

RDAS' privacy policy can be accessed on our website:

www.rdas.com.au

If you require a paper copy of our privacy policy, please ask your Advocate.

Your data

All disability and support services in Australia must report certain information to the Australian Government. RDAS sends this information (data) in a way that **does not identify individual clients.**

It is important for RDAS to collect and report this data, as it informs the story of what has been achieved by our clients with our support. We collect client data at the beginning and end of the advocacy support.

The information we collect and report includes our clients' age, gender, disability, cultural background and nationality.

Consent to share personal information

RDAS may need to talk to other people (doctors, government, and other services) about your issue. **RDAS will always ask for your consent to do this.**

Situations where personal information may need to be shared without your consent

RDAS has a legal responsibility to share personal information with relevant authorities, even without your consent, when:

- They are ordered by a court
- There is a risk of harm to a child (past, present or future)
- There is a risk of harm to you or another person
- There has been disclosure or threat of criminal activity

Do you have a complaint, a compliment, or feedback you would like to give us?

RDAS respects the right of every service user to make a complaint, provide a compliment, or to simply provide feedback about the service they have received.

You will not be treated differently or refused service if you make a complaint.

How to provide feedback about RDAS

Tell us what you are happy or not happy about.

Let us know if you need a translator or accessible options as part of this process.

If you don't want to talk to the Advocate you have been dealing with, you can ask to speak with their supervisor/manager.

You can also make a complaint anonymously, but this will make it more difficult to investigate and resolve.

If you are providing a compliment or feedback, this can be given to the Advocate you have been dealing with, or their supervisor/manager.

We will make sure that those who need to be aware of the compliment or feedback are notified.

If you are making a formal complaint, RDAS will investigate to find out what happened.

This could involve further contact with you, a review of your file notes and discussion with any staff that may have been involved.

Following the investigation of the complaint, you will be contacted with the outcome.

If you are not happy with the outcome, you can request to speak to the Executive Officer regarding your complaint.

The Executive Officer will undertake another investigation and attempt to resolve your complaint.

The Executive Officer will talk to you about what they have found out and try to resolve the complaint with you.

If you are still not happy, you can write a letter addressed to the **Chairperson of the Board.**

Mark it "Private and Confidential" and send it to:
PO Box 982
Wodonga VIC 3689

IMPORTANT

You are welcome to make an external complaint. The following organisations will be able to help.

The Complaints Resolution and Referral Service:
1800 880 052 (toll free)

Ombudsman NSW: 1800 880 052

Disability Service Commissioner (Vic): 1800 677 342

NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission: 1800 035 544

Regional
Disability
Advocacy
Service

RDDAS



Contact Us

Toll free: 1800 250 292

Email: admin@rdas.org.au

Web: www.rdas.org.au

Post: PO Box 982
Wodonga VIC 3689

Offices

Wodonga: 132 Melbourne Rd

Wangaratta: 6/8-10 Tone Rd

Lavington: 2/334 Griffith Rd

Wagga Wagga: 104-105/63 Johnston St

Griffith: 1 Olympic St