

# In conversation with...

## Rhonda

### Enduring Power of Attorney Project



#### What does your role involve?

My role entails acting as attorney for clients who have lost decision-making capacity and have nominated the Public Guardian to make personal and health decisions under an Enduring Power of Attorney or Advance Health Directive document. For adults who still have decision-making capacity, I maintain periodic contact to ensure that their wishes to appoint the Public Guardian as attorney remain current.

#### What is your professional background?

I had a very diverse and interesting career before commencing at OPG, including working in the banking industry, health care sector and the private sector. I also moved to London and worked as a companion to the elderly to enable them to remain living in their homes. This job planted the seed and I knew one day I would return to making a difference to the older generation. This opportunity arose in 2016 where I started at OPG, working in both the Cairns and Brisbane offices. Now I am a senior practice officer where I work with clients who have appointed the Public Guardian to act as their attorney for personal/health matters under an Enduring Power of Attorney.

#### What does your typical work day look?

A portion of my day involves updating details of clients who have appointed the Public Guardian under an Enduring Power of Attorney, either by speaking with them directly or talking to a family member, friend, health professional or service provider. I may also spend some time planning the next visits to these clients which can see me travelling throughout Queensland. During the day I can receive phone calls or emails from people involved in an adult's care to advise that the adult has lost decision-making capacity. I then ensure we have appropriate evidence that the Public Guardian needs to activate the Enduring Power of Attorney document the adult has signed. I also assist adults who have previously appointed the Public Guardian as attorney to revoke that document after they have made arrangements for friends or family members to act as their attorney instead.

#### When have you played an integral role in promoting and protecting OPG clients' human rights?

One of my favourite recent decisions was helping a lady in her mid-90s move to aged care. Angela (not her real name) had lost a lot of mobility after a fall and could no longer safely live in her own home. I chatted to Angela at length about what she wanted, and found her a lovely facility with a view overlooking a beautiful courtyard. Although Angela's mobility is restricted she spends time every day looking at the beautiful view. Angela is as bright as a button and grateful that her wishes were heard.

#### How does your role help promote and protect OPG clients' human rights?

I have a direct role in promoting and protecting our clients' human rights. When an Enduring Power of Attorney is activated, as a nominated attorney I endeavour to always respect the adults' rights and wishes while ensuring they are appropriately supported and cared for. Part of this is ascertaining in the least-intrusive way whether the adult is happily living their life or vulnerable and at risk of abuse or exploitation. I also ensure I adhere to the General Principles which are the rules we have to follow when making decisions on an adult's behalf.

#### What is the best part of your job?

The best part of my job is getting to talk to adults about their lives and how they want to live. I am entrusted with very personal information and it allows me to make decisions about their lives as if I was making a decision for a loved one. I find this unique and very special.