

In conversation with...

Vanessa Investigator



What does your role involve?

As senior investigations officer I conduct investigations into allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults with impaired decision-making capacity and undertake protective activities and advocacy on their behalf. I also undertake investigations into the actions of personal and financial attorneys appointed under an Enduring Power of Attorney, or persons acting as informal substitute decision makers.

What is your professional background?

I hold a Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) and I have completed Honours in Psychology. For as long as I can remember I have had a genuine passion and interest in human rights and am driven to support others to 'find their voice', particularly when they have faced various adversities and challenges in life. I previously worked at Child Safety. I ended up at OPG because I felt that it was an organisation that truly valued its clients and protected their rights.

What does your typical work day look like?

My day will change depending on whether I am in the office or out on visits for my investigations. If I am in the office, I am often writing investigation reports, responding to emails and requesting copious amounts of information in order to investigate concerns raised within a case. When I am out of the office, I visit adults and their carers or attorneys to ensure the adult is safe, happy and their rights are protected. I will often speak with adults alone (if they are comfortable with this) to ensure they are able to speak openly and honestly with me about any worries they have. If the adult is non-verbal, I will change my approach to align with how the adult communicates.

What are some challenges you've faced?

Our team has a large number of active investigations so I am often faced with the challenge of completing many, many tasks in a short amount of time. If an adult is at immediate risk of harm, however, this investigation becomes my priority to ensure they are safe and their interests are protected. It is essential that I manage my time effectively to ensure each investigation is completed in a timely manner and to a high standard.

What is the most inspiring thing you've seen or been part of at OPG?

The first thing that comes to mind is a colleague of mine working endlessly to support a client to leave a situation where they were being physically, emotionally and verbally abused. Unfortunately, due to the high-risk situation, this required the execution of a warrant. However, my colleague implemented the warrant in such a thoughtful and innovative way which resulted in minimal to no stress for the client. My colleague developed a respectful and genuine working relationship with the client, and he truly trusted her to do her job and help him. The client is now living elsewhere and is excited to be learning new skills and gaining independence.

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

Quite recently, I conducted an investigation in relation to a gentleman in his early 60s called Ian (not his real name). Ian was diagnosed with an intellectual disability and he was residing with a carer who was not providing him with enough things to do, nor were they arranging adequate support services for him. There were also concerns about physical assault, and he desperately wanted to make new friends. After visiting Ian, I applied to QCAT for an interim order seeking the appointment of the Public Guardian for his personal and health care decisions and the Public Trustee regarding his finances. Thankfully, this was granted. Through collaboration with my colleagues in guardianship, this lovely man is now residing in a supported independent living arrangement and he is reportedly happy and doing well.

What is the best part of your job?

It sounds corny but the best part of my job is making a meaningful difference in someone's life. There's no better feeling. It's that simple.