

WWDA Annual Report 1998-1999

Introduction

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with disabilities in Australia. It is a federating body of individuals and networks in each State and Territory of Australia and is made up of women with disabilities and associated organisations. WWDA is a woman centred organisation which works on a collective model. This means that decisions are made using a consensus approach. The national secretariat is located in Canberra. WWDA is run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australia and one of only a very small number internationally. It is currently the only national multi-diagnostic disability organisation with individual, grass roots membership. WWDA is inclusive and does not discriminate against any disability.

WWDA seeks to ensure opportunities in all walks of life for all women with disabilities. In this it aims to increase awareness of, and address issues faced by, women with disabilities in the community. It links women with disabilities from around Australia, providing opportunities to identify and discuss issues of common concern. The objectives of the organisation include:

- to develop a network of women with disabilities throughout Australia to work together for their mutual benefit;
- to advocate for every woman with a disability to have the opportunity for true involvement in all levels of society;
- to develop leadership and the sharing of responsibilities to enable women with disabilities to take their place in whatever section of society they choose;
- to change social attitudes, practices, and power relationships which discriminate against women with disabilities;
- to lobby for the implementation of procedures and enactment of legislation which will advance and benefit all women with disabilities and combat sexism;
- to inform and educate the public with a view to advancing the opportunities for women in the political, creative, civil and social fields.

This Annual Report provides detailed information on WWDA's activities during the period September 1998 – September 1999. Reports are provided by WWDA's President Vicki Toovey (who resigned in May 99); WWDA's Acting President from May 99, Joyce Deering, and WWDA's Executive Officer Carolyn Frohmader. WWDA State and Territory branch reports are also included in this Annual Report, along with reports from WWDA Representatives on various committees, advisory bodies etc.

WWDA Presidents Report – by Vicki Toovey

The past year has held many challenges for us as individual women with disabilities and also as an organisation. My major personal challenge was to decide to take a rather large leap career wise and to accept a position working with the Minister for Family and Community Services in Canberra as an adviser on women's issues and disability issues. It was with regret that I had to leave the position as

Chairperson some months earlier than expected. However it has been a privilege to have learned so much through working with WWDA and to take this learning with me.

There have been personal tragedies for our members which have touched all of us.

One of these was the news of Elizabeth Hastings' death. Many of us had shared Elizabeth's passion and commitment when she spoke to us just a few weeks earlier in her role as Disability Discrimination Commissioner. We had asked her to speak at our Annual General Meeting in Melbourne in September and she had spoken to us on some key areas in which she believed that WWDA should play a leadership role. As usual she stirred us emotionally and intellectually on issues such as sterilisation of women with disabilities, accommodation, ethics and genetic engineering. I feel proud that we were able to give a strong profile to the issue of sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities at the First Australian Tribunal on Women's Human Rights held in May 1999. I dedicated the testimony which I presented on behalf of other women to Elizabeth.

WWDA has continued to maintain a high profile in both women's areas and disability areas. We have continued to successfully profile the issue of violence and our publications and continuing advocacy, I believe, led to the decision by the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce to announce a National Project on Violence against Women with Disabilities in May. This is a real example of mainstream influence and we will watch for the outcomes with great interest.

The issues of sterilisation and violence have also been supported by work that other members of WWDA have contributed in the human rights area. Helen Meekosha has continued to be the representative for the National Caucus of Consumer Disability Organisations on the Attorney General's Human Rights Forum. She has presented papers and provided input to the paper on Human Rights which Carolyn Frohmader facilitated on our behalf for the Caucus.

Telecommunications has had attention on a number of levels. The Survey conducted by WWDA to assist in identifying issues facing women with disabilities in relation to telecommunications has received much attention. The development of our website has been another major step forward.

Both of these issues have been the result of the consistent vision and hard work of our Chief Executive Officer, Carolyn Frohmader. We are all aware of the major contribution which Carolyn continues to make on behalf of WWDA. She never allows opportunities for WWDA to be consulted with to be neglected or opportunities for WWDA members to participate to be lost. She advocates strongly for any supports which might be required to ensure that women can participate and constantly challenges processes which place barriers in the way of such participation.

The amount of correspondence and communication which needs to be managed from a very small national office can be quite overwhelming and the burden on a small staff is considerable. Some changes to the administrative structure of the office have enabled a more transparent and reliable approach to office management. However it remains an issue that we are constantly managing an enormous amount of work with a very small support base.

WWDA continues to be well positioned to advocate and provide strong leadership for women with disabilities in many arenas. I send my best wishes to the members of the National Executive Committee and thank them and our CEO for their support.

WWDA Treasurer and Acting Presidents Report – by Joyce Deering

Since the May 1999 Teleconference, I have combined my role as Treasurer with Acting President, with Karin Swift and Keran Howe as Vice Presidents until the 1999 AGM. Karin and Keran were to represent WWDA at national meetings in Canberra – the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations and the National Women’s Round Table Meeting. The National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations met in September 1999 and the National Women’s Round Table Meeting, originally scheduled for August 1999, was postponed until later in the year.

Being able to spend time with Carolyn Frohmader in the National WWDA Office in September was beneficial for me. Looking at the financial figures, budget and the cut in our funding from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, it was clear that funding a face to face AGM in 1999 would put a strain on WWDA’s finances, and the Teleconference on 15 September 1999 agreed that the 1999 AGM be dealt with via Teleconference in October. The cost of travel, accommodation, attendant care, venue hire and catering and other expenses, would be in the vicinity of \$10,000 which can now be available to cover WWDA’s operational expenses.

The AccessAbility Online Project is ongoing and Sue Salthouse’s work as Project Officer is appreciated. There are still groups not yet set up with the latest in communication technology due to varied reasons and it will be a real asset when it is achieved. The need to access funding outside of government was part of the contract signed for the current WWDA funding, and Carolyn has continued to make submissions to several philanthropic organisations making them aware of WWDA’s unique role in the disability sector and our value in supporting women with disabilities.

The WWDA Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit being developed with funding from the Global Fund for Women (USA) is well on the way and when complete will be a very valuable resource tool for many groups and one of the means of raising funding. WWDA publications are selling like hotcakes and this too is another area where we are actually raising funds. We have had a busy and different year in many ways. Other projects have been successfully completed and made available to the community.

The year ahead will offer other challenges and no doubt problems as we continue to travel this road in our commitment to ensuring that women with disabilities’ voice is heard loud and clear – we accept our task for all women to enjoy a better life.

WWDA Executive Officers Report – by Carolyn Frohmader

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) has continued to grow and strengthen over the past year. The work WWDA has done over the past 12 months has lifted the organisation’s public profile considerably at State, national and international levels. WWDA’s input to the development of policy, programs and services is now routinely sought from all levels of government as well as disability and mainstream organisations at both national and State/Territory levels. The increase in WWDA’s public profile has seen a steady increase in memberships, from both organisations and individuals.

The projects WWDA has done in the last 12 months have contributed significantly to the increasing public profile and increase in new members, with WWDA’s membership now close to 2000. Most notable is WWDA’s impact on mainstream services such as domestic violence services and women’s refuges; sexual assault services; women’s health centres; community health centres; legal services; advocacy services and so on. Many of these types of services and organisations, having not traditionally identified as ‘disability service providers’ have taken up WWDA membership and are working with WWDA to re-orient their services to better meet the needs of women with disabilities.

WWDA's achievements over the past year have been significant. The organisation has been successful in attracting project funding to carry out projects in the areas of information technology, violence, telecommunications, and leadership and mentoring. WWDA has been regularly invited to participate in government consultations, such as the development of Model Domestic Violence Laws; the Review of the National Women's Non-Government Funding Program; the development of a National Ageing Strategy; just to name a few. WWDA members have also presented papers at a wide range of Conferences and several of these papers have been published in national and international journals.

WWDA's work in the area of violence against women with disabilities has received national and international recognition and this has contributed to WWDA's increased profile and growth. Requests for information about our innovative work in the violence area have come from Israel, England, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. WWDA's recognition at an international level is evident with our organisation being invited to present papers at International Conferences. The development of a WWDA website has also contributed to our profile at State, national and international levels.

This report provides information about WWDA's activities and major achievements over the past 12 months. It describes WWDA's activities and achievements in the main program areas of: violence; leadership and mentoring; telecommunications and information technology; housing; health, and links with the women's movement. The report provides information about WWDA's input into policy development and systemic change undertaken by other bodies. It also describes WWDA's work in the area of organisational development and administrative issues.

The following information has been organised to reflect WWDA's goal areas as set out in the WWDA Strategic Plan. It is not a detailed report, but rather has been written to highlight some of WWDA's major achievements and also to demonstrate the diversity of the organisation and the work WWDA does as the national peak body for women with disabilities.

GOAL 1: To research, analyse and take action on issues of concern to women with disabilities falling within the policy priorities of WWDA: Violence (includes Sterilisation), Telecommunications (includes Information Technology), Leadership and Mentoring, Health, Ageing; Housing, Links to the women's movement, and Organisational Development.

Violence Against Women With Disabilities

Over the past year, WWDA has continued to undertake work in the area of violence against women with disabilities. More detail about activities in this area over the last 12 months has been included under Goal 2 of this report.

A major achievement for WWDA in the area of violence against women with disabilities during the past year was the announcement of a National Project on Violence Against Women With Disabilities, funded through the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy. This national project, which commenced in mid 1999, came about as a direct result of WWDA's research work into violence against women with disabilities, along with WWDA's effective lobbying of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce. WWDA was successful in having the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce recognise that violence against women with disabilities was an area that should be addressed through the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative. This project is the first of its

kind in Australia and is the first national project on women with disabilities and violence to be funded by the Commonwealth Government. WWDA is represented on the Project Management Group by Keran Howe, and also has representatives on the Project reference Group.

Some of the work WWDA has undertaken in relation to violence against women with disabilities during the past year includes:

- Publishing of the National Women With Disabilities and Violence Workshop Report;
- Establishment of a National Women With Disabilities and Violence Network;
- Funding Submission to the Business Against Domestic Violence Initiative;
- Participation in violence research being undertaken by other agencies/researchers;
- Updating and marketing of the WWDA Violence Against Women With Disabilities Information Kit;
- Sales of the WWDA Violence Against Women With Disabilities Information Kit to over 100 organisations;
- Development of a WWDA Submission to the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy and Taskforce;
- Participation in the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Competency Standards Project;
- Assisting in the development of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Access and Equity Manual (including writing the Chapter for the Manual on 'Women With Disabilities');
- Publishing articles about violence against women with disabilities in the WWDA Newsletter;
- Publishing of a feature article about violence against women with disabilities in the National Exchange of Women's Services Newsletter;
- Publishing of a feature article about violence against women with disabilities in the National SSAP Newsletter;
- Application to the Australian Violence Prevention Awards for 1998;
- Meeting with the Adviser to the Minister for Family and Community Services regarding violence and illegal sterilisation of women with disabilities;
- Presentation at the Women's Rights Action Network Public Human Rights Tribunal on Sterilisation of Minors in Australia;
- Presentation of a speech at the International Women's Day March in Queensland;
- Mentoring work with the National Peak Body for women's refuges in New Zealand regarding improving access to women's refuges in NZ for women with disabilities;
- Analysis of Literature on Sterilisation of Women With Disabilities;
- Commencement of work on a draft WWDA Policy and Position Paper on Sterilisation of Women With Disabilities;
- Inclusion of accessible information about violence against women with disabilities on the WWDA website;
- Inclusion in the International Publication "Loud Proud and Passionate" on WWDA's achievements in the area of violence against women with disabilities;
- Input to the South Australian Women's Advisory Council Women and Violence Standing Committee;
- Charles Sturt University Project
- Representation at the Attorney Generals Human Rights NGO's Forum;
- Presentation of a Poster Display and Information Exhibition on WWDA's work on violence at the International Women's Health Conference in Scotland;
- Development of Recommendations to the Selection Panel for the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 'Women With Disabilities and Violence Project';
- Input into the NSW Disability Council Justice System Research Project;
- Input into the Benevolent Society of NSW Violence Project.

Access to Telecommunications (includes Information Technology)

A significant amount of work has been undertaken by WWDA over the last 12 months in the area of

improving access to telecommunications and information technologies for women with disabilities. Some of the work WWDA has undertaken in these areas include:

- Implementation of the Introduction to the Internet Workshop for Women With Disabilities;
- Successful funding submission to the AccessAbility Online Grants Program (National Office of the Information Economy);
- Development, implementation and analysis of a Pilot National WWDA Telecommunications Survey;
- Formulation of a WWDA Report on Access to Telecommunications for Women With Disabilities;
- Participation in the National Telstra Community Issues Survey;
- Development of a National WWDA Website as a model of best practice in design and content;
- Development of a funding submission to the Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grants Program for a major research project on the interaction between gender, disability and access to telecommunications;
- Participation in the Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation and Telecommunications Project
- Participation in email lists including Pamela's List; Ausfempolnet List; OzAdvocacy List.
- Participation in the National Disability Database Linkage Study
- Successful funding submission to the Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grants Program (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts) for WWDA representation to Telecommunications industry fora;
- Representation on the Telstra Disability Forum;
- Representation on the Australian Communication Industry Forum (ACIF) Disability Advisory Body;
- Presentation of WWDA Telecommunications Research Findings to Telstra, the Australian Communication Industry Forum (ACIF), and the Consumers Telecommunications Network (CTN);
- Development of an Electronic Mailing List for Women With Disabilities;
- Input to the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia Project 'Increasing Women's Participation in the Vocational Education Training Centre';

Leadership and Mentoring

WWDA has continued to undertake work in the area of leadership and mentoring for women with disabilities, and this has included:

- Development of a Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit for Women with Disabilities (funded through the Global Fund for Women USA);
- Presentation of a Workshop on Women With Disabilities and Leadership at the Fourth International Leadership Conference in Perth, Western Australia;
- One to one mentoring of new WWDA members by experienced WWDA members.
- Development of a funding submission to the National Women's NGO Funding Program (Project Stream) for a National Leadership and Mentoring Workshop for Women With Disabilities;
- Development of a funding submission to the Paul Newman Foundation for Leadership and Mentoring Training Workshops in each State/Territory;
- Development of a funding submission to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (Office of Disability) for a Leadership and Mentoring Program for WWDA.

Ageing

Some of WWDA's achievements in this area over the last year have included:

- Publication of an article by a WWDA member on Ageing and Long Term Disabilities in a major academic journal;
- Presentation of a Paper on 'Ageing and Long Term Disabilities' by a WWDA member at the International Conference on Women's Health, held in Scotland;

- Development of submissions and requests for funding to send WWDA representatives to the International Conference on Women's Health;
- Participation in the National Disability Advisory Committee Ageing and Disability Survey;
- Participation in and representation at the Consultations for Older People with Long-term Disability;
- Participation in and representation at the National Women's Forum for the International Year of Older Persons;
- Participation in Consultations for the National Work to Retirement for People with Disabilities Research Project;
- WWDA Representation on the Steering Committee for the National Work to Retirement for People with Disabilities Research Project.
- Development of a WWDA Response to the Two Year Review of Aged Care Reforms;

Health

WWDA's main work in this area over the last 12 months has been in its efforts to create linkages with organisations and services in the women's health and general health sector, and through this, advocate for the health needs of women with disabilities to be addressed. Examples of some of WWDA's activities in this area have included:

- Publication of a paper by WWDA members in the academic health journal: Primary Health Care Interchange;
- WWDA Representation on the Australian Women's Health Network Management Committee;
- Development of a section on Women With Disabilities on the Australian Women's Health Network website;
- Presentation of a Paper by a WWDA member at the International Conference on Women's Health, in Scotland
- Development of submissions and requests for funding to send WWDA representative to the International Conference on Women's Health;
- Presentation of a Workshop on the 'Health Issues of Women With Disabilities' at the Australian Association of Women's Health Practitioners Forum in Sydney;
- Advocacy work with the Australian Consumers Health Forum which resulted in Disability Awareness Training for Consumers Health Forum staff along with the development of disability policies for the Consumers Health Forum;
- Participation in, and representation at the National Consumer's Health Forum Workshop on "Choosing Your Medicines".
- Targeting women's health centres and services for uptake of WWDA membership;
- Participation in the Westmead Hospital Health Directory Survey
- Writing of an article about women with disabilities and violence in the Australian Women's Health Network Newsletter;
- Input into the establishment of the National Resources Centre for Consumer Participation in Health
- Input into the development of a National Consumer Participation Tool Kit (being developed by Flinders University of South Australia);
- Input into the Attorney Generals Department Consultation Process on the Development of Principles for Handling Personal Health Information;
- Participation in, and representation on the Steering Committee of the NSW Family Planning Project 'The Development of Sexual Health Protocols for Women With Disabilities';

Housing

During 1998-99, WWDA's work in the area of housing has included:

- Working with Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funded services to advocate for the need to improve access to such services for women with disabilities;
- Ongoing promotion of the WWDA Disability Discrimination Act Reports “*More Than Just A Ramp*” and the “*Woorarra Women’s Refuge Action Plan*”;
- Development of a submission to the National SAAP Evaluation;
- Participation in and representation at public forums and consultations for the National SAAP Evaluation;
- Lobbying National SAAP Evaluation Project Team for information to be provided in alternative formats;
- Organising SAAP Evaluation Discussion Papers and other information to be mounted on the Internet;
- Providing information to the Women’s Emergency Services Network for the publication of an article on Women with Disabilities and Homelessness;
- Participation in, and representation at the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Forum ‘Developing a Strategic Framework for SAAP’;
- Assisting in the development of the NSW Women’s Refuge Movement Access and Equity Manual (including writing the Chapter for the Manual on ‘Women With Disabilities’);
- Publishing of a feature article about violence against women with disabilities in the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Newsletter;

Links to the Women’s Movement

WWDA has made good progress in this area over the last year. WWDA is now widely recognised and respected as a national women’s peak body as well as a national disability peak body. WWDA has had significant success in its systemic advocacy work with women’s organisations and services at local, regional, State, National and International levels. Just some examples of WWDA’s achievements in this area include:

- Mentoring work with the National Peak Body for women’s refuges in New Zealand regarding improving access to women’s refuges in NZ for women with disabilities;
- Presentation of a Workshop on Women With Disabilities at the Annual General Meeting of the YWCA;
- Submitting a chapter on WWDA for the second edition of the book entitled “*Loud, Proud and Passionate*” produced by Mobility International USA;
- Presentation of a Workshop at the International Women and Leadership Conference in Perth;
- Presentation at the International Women’s Day Public Rally in Queensland;
- Targeting women’s health centres and services for uptake of WWDA membership;
- Increase in the numbers of domestic violence services, sexual assault services, women’s legal services etc taking up WWDA membership;
- Presentation of a Paper at the National Workshop on the Theory and Practice of Representation in Australian Politics;
- Representation on the Australian Women’s Health Network Management Committee;
- Presentation of a Paper by a WWDA member at the International Conference on Women’s Health, in Scotland
- Poster Presentation and Information Exhibition on WWDA’s work in the area of violence against women with disabilities at the International Conference on Women’s Health, in Scotland
- Subscription to and participation in electronic discussion forums for women: Ozadvocacy; Austfempolnet; Pamela’s List; Emily’s List, Women in International Linkage Disability;
- Publishing of articles in national women’s newsletters including a feature article in the Network Exchange of Women’s Services Newsletter; the Australian Women’s Health Network Newsletter;
- Presentation of a Workshop on the ‘Health Issues of Women With Disabilities’ at the Australian Association of Women’s Health Practitioners Forum in Sydney;
- Participation in, and presentation at the Minister for the Status of Women Round Table in Canberra;

- Establishment of networks with women's organisations at an International level including the Canadian Women's Health Network; the Disabled Women's Network Canada; the Office of Gender Equity Johannesburg; Mobility International USA; the Disabled People's International Women's Committee; etc.
- Collaboration with the NSW Women's Refuge Movement in the development of the Access and Equity Manual (including writing the Chapter for the Manual on 'Women With Disabilities');
- Presentation of a Workshop at the International Women and Leadership Conference in Western Australia;
- Presentation at the Women's Rights Action Network of Australia (WRANA) Tribunal on Human Rights;
- Participation in the Review of the National Women's Non-Government Organisations Funding Program Review;
- Collaboration with the national Women's Justice Coalition on an Information Technology Project for Women With Disabilities;
- Representation at the Rural Women's Round table Meetings with the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women;
- Participation in, and representation on the Steering Committee of the NSW Family Planning Project 'The Development of Sexual Health Protocols for Women With Disabilities';

GOAL 2: To initiate systemic change activities in specific areas of concern to WWDA members: a) Increase the accessibility of services for women with disabilities who have been subjected to violence; and b) Promote access to information technology for women with disabilities.

Violence Against Women With Disabilities

Over the past 12 months, WWDA has continued to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women with disabilities. Our work in this area has received national and international recognition and we have taken a leadership role in assisting services and organisations to recognise and address the issue of violence against women with disabilities.

WWDA has had several notable achievements in the area of violence against women with disabilities. Perhaps most notable is WWDA's work with the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative. Through effective and persistent lobbying, along with the promotion of WWDA's work on violence, WWDA was able to get the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce to not only recognise the issue of violence against women with disabilities, but allocate resources to a national research project focusing on the information and education needs of women with disabilities in relation to domestic violence. Inherent in this was getting the Taskforce to expand their definition of 'domestic' to include a broader range of settings – for example: group homes, institutions and so on. This national project on women with disabilities and violence is the first of its kind in Australia and is the first to be funded by the Commonwealth Government. The Project is being undertaken by KPMG and commenced in mid 1999. WWDA continues to be closely involved in the Project.

WWDA has continued to promote its work on violence against women with disabilities at local, State, national and international levels. In early 1999, WWDA published the report from the 1998 WWDA National Violence Workshop. This report has been widely disseminated and publicised and many organisations and services have purchased the report. WWDA also further developed its 'Women With

Disabilities and Violence Information Kit' and has sold this Kit to many organisations and services within Australia and overseas. Development of a WWDA website during 1999 was another mechanism WWDA used to make its resource materials on violence widely accessible. This has proven to be a highly successful strategy with many individuals, organisations and services accessing the material on the site. Some examples of how the information on the website has been used include: students from a wide range of disciplines (such as social work, health, nursing, welfare studies etc) have been accessing WWDA's website for information to assist in their studies; lawyers in Canada have incorporated WWDA materials on violence into an Information Package for Canadian magistrates; service providers (such as domestic violence services, legal services, advocacy services etc) have been downloading information from the site and giving it to individual women with disabilities who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing violence.

WWDA has been able to take on a leadership role with organisations and services to assist them in better addressing the issue of violence against women with disabilities. In mid 1999, WWDA worked collaboratively with the NSW Women's Refuge Movement to develop an Access and Equity Manual for women's refuges, crisis and emergency services, and other relevant agencies. WWDA wrote the chapter in the Access and Equity Manual on 'Women With Disabilities' and the Manual was publicly launched in late 1999. WWDA has also worked collaboratively with the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges in Aotearoa/New Zealand to assist them in developing programs to improve access to women's refuges in New Zealand for women with disabilities. The National Collective is using WWDA's *'More Than Just A Ramp – A Guide to Developing Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans'* as a model of best practice. WWDA has also provided information and guidance to Rehabilitation Services in Israel on how to develop programs to better meet the needs of women with disabilities who have experienced violence.

WWDA's achievements in the area of violence have been widely recognised. During 1998-99, two national newsletters – the Network Exchange of Women's Services Newsletter and the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) – wrote feature articles about WWDA's work on violence. WWDA was also invited to send a representative to the International Women's Health Conference in Scotland in July 99 to give a poster display and information exhibition on WWDA's work on violence against women with disabilities. In May 99, WWDA was invited to give a presentation on violence at the first ever Women and Human Rights Tribunal in Melbourne. WWDA's then President, Ms Vicki Toovey, gave a presentation to the Tribunal on Illegal Sterilisation of Women With Disabilities. Several hundred people attended the event, which was also telecast live across the Internet. WWDA's innovative work around violence was also recognised by Mobility International USA, who invited WWDA to contribute a chapter to an International Publication on Violence entitled 'Loud, Proud and Passionate'.

WWDA's work in the area of violence has had many spinoffs and has influenced organisations and services at local levels throughout Australia and overseas to undertake their own research around violence and women with disabilities and develop programs to address the issue. WWDA has had input to many of these programs and research projects. WWDA has also had input to mainstream initiatives occurring in the area of domestic violence such as the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Competency Standards Project.

Telecommunications (including information technology)

In mid 1998, WWDA successfully applied for funding to conduct an Information Technology Project for women with disabilities. WWDA received \$64,000 from the AccessAbility Online Grants Program (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts) and the project commenced in early 1999. The first component of the Project was to develop a website for WWDA which was completed in March 1999. The website was developed to act as a 'one stop shop' for information on women with disabilities and was developed to meet the needs of a wide range of users, including

women with disabilities, community care workers, policy makers, organisations in the disability and women's sectors, academics, researchers, and so on.

The WWDA website currently provides the following information, but will continue to be built upon as a Site of Excellence in content and design:

- What's New and Current Activities
- About Women With Disabilities Australia – Background; Objectives; Management; Membership; Funding; Policy and Program Areas; Organisational Affiliations; Women With Disabilities Australia Constitution; How You Can Help Women With Disabilities Australia; Contact Information; National Peak Disability Organisations
- Submissions to Government Consultations and Processes; Conference Papers and Publications; Annual Reports and Reports to Funding Bodies; WWDA Reports and Publications
- WWDA Newsletters – Back Issues and Current Issues
- Issues – Advocacy; Ageing; Citizenship; Education and Employment; Eugenics and Euthanasia; Gender and Disability; Health Issues; Housing Issues; Information Technology; Leadership and Mentoring; Legal Issues; Motherhood and Parenting; Non-English Speaking Background and Indigenous Issues; Sexuality and Reproductive Rights, Sterilisation of Minors; Transport and Travel; Violence and Abuse
- Summaries of websites specific to women with disabilities; Links to Australian and international disability websites; Links to disability related Newsgroups
- About The Site – Design and Accessibility; The Need for a WWDA Website; Acknowledgment to the Funding Body; Links to Websites Dealing with Accessible Website Design; How you can contribute to this website
- Links to Australian Government Departments and Agencies
- Links to Australian Universities
- Search Engines

The WWDA Website can be found at: <http://www.wwda.org.au>

The Information Technology Project for Women With Disabilities is currently still being implemented. The remaining two stages of the Project will see WWDA State and Territory branches provided with an Internet networked computer and also training workshops for women with disabilities to learn how to use the Internet.

A major achievement for WWDA during the last year has been the National WWDA Telecommunications Survey and the publishing of a report from the survey. WWDA conducted a survey of its members to elicit information about their concerns relating to access to telecommunications, including the Internet. The survey results were analysed and documented in a report entitled: '*Telecommunications and Women With Disabilities*'. The report was distributed widely to Telecommunications Industry fora, relevant government departments and agencies, and other key stakeholders, including:

- Telstra Disability Services Unit
- Australian Communication Exchange
- Australian Communications Industry Forum
- Australian Communications Industry Forum Disability Advisory Body
- Minister for Communication, Information Technology and the Arts
- Consumer Telecommunications Network
- Telecommunications Competition and Consumer Division (Dept of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts)
- Consumer and Pricing Policy Section (Dept of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts)
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

- Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women
- AccessAbility Online (National Office of the Information Economy)
- Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women
- Optus Communications
- Telstra Consumer Affairs
- Australian Communications Authority
- Telstra Consumer Consultative Council,
- Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
- Vodafone Network Pty Ltd
- Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services

WWDA received very positive feedback on the report from many circles, including Telstra, who invited WWDA to give a presentation about the research to Senior Executives of Telstra in September 1999. Telstra also invited WWDA to join the Telstra Disability Forum and the Telstra Disability Equipment Committee.

In mid 1999, WWDA applied for funding under the Telecommunications Act Consumer Representation Grants Program. WWDA requested funding to conduct further research, and also to enable WWDA representation on various Telecommunications Fora. WWDA received a small amount of funding for representation (\$5,000) and has been invited by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to submit another funding application for telecommunications research. WWDA now has representatives on the following Committees and Advisory Bodies: the Telstra Disability Forum; Telstra Disability Equipment Committee; Australian Communications Industry Forum (ACIF) Disability Advisory Body; Consumer Telecommunications Network (CTN); the Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation and Telecommunications Project.

During the year, WWDA has also had input into telecommunications and information technology projects being conducted by other bodies – examples include: the National Disability Database Linkage Study; and the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia Project ‘Increasing Women’s Participation in the Vocational Education Training Centre’.

GOAL 3: To contribute to systemic change via representation on national committees, task forces and advisory bodies and by initiating systemic change activities.

WWDA’s work in the systemic advocacy area has escalated over the last year. The organisations profile has increased significantly and this has seen a dramatic increase in invitations to provide input into consultations and similar processes being undertaken by government departments, organisations, professional associations and so on. The work WWDA has undertaken in this area demonstrates its commitment in advocating for legislation, policy, services and organisations to be more responsive to, and inclusive of, women with disabilities.

During 1998-99, WWDA had input to many consultations, reviews and similar processes. In early 1999, WWDA was invited to contribute to the Review of the National Women’s NGO Funding Program (Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women). WWDA undertook a consultation process with its members and developed a comprehensive and detailed submission to the Review. WWDA’s submission was also forwarded to Senator Jocelyn Newman and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (Office of Disability), as many of the issues WWDA raised in its submission were relevant to its relationship with the Office of Disability. WWDA was one of only two national women’s

organisations to provide a written submission to the Review. The WWDA submission was also made available on the WWDA website.

Another major Review in which WWDA participated was the National Disability Advocacy Program Review being conducted by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. The Review commenced in 1997 and the Draft Steering Committee was released in late 98. A consultation phase was organised to enable organisations to comment on the report and the recommendations it contained. WWDA developed a comprehensive submission to the first stages of the Advocacy Program Review, and in early 99, undertook consultations with its members to develop a Submission in response to the Draft Steering Committee Report. The final Report was released in late 1999.

WWDA also participated in the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Evaluation which commenced in mid 1998. WWDA undertook a significant amount of lobbying work with the Project Managers to ensure that people with disabilities were included in all aspects of the Evaluation process. WWDA developed a written submission to the SAAP Evaluation following a consultation process undertaken with WWDA members. WWDA was also represented at the SAAP Evaluation public forums which were held in each capital city.

In late 1998, WWDA developed a submission to the Australian Sports Commission Women And Sport Unit on the Draft National Plan for Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity 1998-2002. WWDA also met with senior personnel from the Australian Sports Commission to discuss strategies the Women and Sport Unit could employ to better meet the needs of women with disabilities. The submission from WWDA on the Draft National Plan for Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity was very well received and all proposed amendments by WWDA were adopted in the Plan.

In late 1998, WWDA was invited by the National Disability Advisory Council (NDAC) to participate in a survey on issues for people with long term disabilities and age related disabilities. The survey was undertaken by NDAC in an effort to ensure that the needs of people with long term disabilities and age related disabilities are reflected in the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia. WWDA developed a detailed submission to the Survey, which dealt with the following areas:

- Independence and Self Provision (eg: affordable and appropriate housing and transport; education and employment; financial security; including income support)
- World Class Care (for all govt and non-govt provided services and care)
- Attitudes, Lifestyle and Community Support (eg: being respected and valued; participation in community life; participation in social activities; access to affordable communications technology)
- Healthy Ageing (eg: access to appropriate preventative health and medical care; access to therapy and equipment; nutritional and exercise/recreational issues).

WWDA also participated in consultations being undertaken by the National Disability Advisory Council on older persons with a long term disability. Consultations were held in Victoria, South Australia, and the Northern Territory and a WWDA representative attended each of these. Reports from the Consultations were forwarded to those WWDA members who attended the consultation meetings.

WWDA has had input to many other consultations and review processes, far too many to detail here. Many of these consultations required WWDA to develop written submissions and/or responses. WWDA members also represented the organisation at many workshops and other consultative forums. Some of the consultation and reviews WWDA has participated in during 1998-99 include:

- National Workshop on the Theory and Practice of Representation on Australian Politics
- National Women's Forum for the International Year of Older Persons
- Consultations for the National Work to Retirement for People with Disabilities Research Project
- National Telstra Community Issues Survey

- MIMS Disability and Domestic Violence Research Project (Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, Queensland)
- Jennifer Mays (Phd Queensland University) Disability and Domestic Violence Project
- National Access Institute of Australia Feasibility Research Project (University of Sydney)
- Keys Young National Domestic Violence Research Project
- Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Competency Standards Research Project
- Culture of Chaos: Indigenous women and vulnerability in an Australian Rural Reserve (Phd University of Queensland)
- Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation and Telecommunications Project
- National Disability Database Linkage Study (Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine)
- Social Citizenship and Sexual Minorities: The experiences of gays and lesbians in accessing welfare benefits and social services (Charles Sturt University Project)
- The National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy and Taskforce
- The National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Competency Standards Project
- The Women's Rights Action Network Public Human Rights Tribunal
- The South Australian Women's Advisory Council Women and Violence Standing Committee
- The NSW Disability Council Justice System Research Project
- The Benevolent Society of NSW Violence Project
- The Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia Project 'Increasing Women's Participation in the Vocational Education Training Centre'
- Two Year Review of Aged Care Reforms (Department of Health and Aged Care)
- Westmead Hospital Health Directory Survey
- The establishment of the National Resources Centre for Consumer Participation in Health Project
- The development of a National Consumer Participation Tool Kit (being developed by Flinders University of South Australia)
- The Attorney Generals Department Consultation Process on the Development of Principles for Handling Personal Health Information
- NSW Family Planning Project 'The Development of Sexual Health Protocols for Women With Disabilities'
- Participation in, and representation at the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Forum 'Developing a Strategic Framework for SAAP'
- Review of the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations
- ACOSS Budget Submission/Tax Reform Consultations

As well as having input to a wide range of reviews and consultations across various sectors, WWDA also been represented on a number of government and industry forums, advisory bodies, committees etc. These include:

- The Attorney Generals' Human Rights NGO's Forum;
- The Project Management Group for the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 'Women With Disabilities and Violence Project';
- The Project Reference Group for the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 'Women With Disabilities and Violence Project';
- The Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation and Telecommunications Project
- Telstra Disability Forum;
- Telstra Disability Equipment Programs Committee;
- Australian Communication Industry Forum (ACIF) Disability Advisory Body;
- Consumers Telecommunications Network (CTN) Committee;
- Steering Committee for the National Work to Retirement for People with Disabilities Research Project.

- The Australian Women's Health Network Management Committee;
 - Steering Committee of the NSW Family Planning Project 'The Development of Sexual Health Protocols for Women With Disabilities';
 - Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women National Round Table Forum;
 - Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women Rural and Regional Round Table Forums;
 - The Disability Discrimination Act Standards Project Steering Committee;
 - The National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations;
 - The Ministerial Committee on Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs, Task Force on DDA Education Standards;
 - The Australian National Training Authority Disability Forum;
 - AUSTEL Consumer Consultative Forum;
 - Standards Australia ME64 Committee.
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GOAL 4: Promote the leadership skills of women with disabilities.

In 1998, WWDA applied to the Global Fund for Women (based in the United States) for funding to enable the development of a Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit for women with disabilities in Australia. The need for this project had been identified by WWDA members in consultations undertaken by WWDA. A Leadership Workshop was conducted by WWDA in October 97 and the outcomes and recommendations from the Leadership Workshop were used to formulate WWDA's submission to the Global Fund for Women. This submission was successful and in late 1998, WWDA received \$15,000 US dollars to undertake the Project. A Project Officer was employed to undertake the Project, however she resigned due to ill health only 6 weeks into the Project. WWDA then contracted a WWDA member as a Consultant to develop a Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit for women with disabilities. The Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit was co-authored by Carolyn Frohmader (WWDA Executive Officer) and Anne Storr (Consultant) with assistance from WWDA members Margaret Cooper and Jenny Stanzl. The Kit is nearing completion and contains modules of information in the following areas:

- An overview and background to the Kit, including: information about Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), as well as definitions and models of disability.
- Issues relating to personal development for women with disabilities, covering areas such as self esteem and confidence; assertiveness and public speaking.
- Mentoring for women with disabilities, including: an overview and history of mentoring; roles of both mentors and mentorees; benefits of a mentoring program, styles of Mentoring, how to develop a successful Mentoring Relationship.
- Leadership for women with disabilities including: Feminist Leadership and the differences between traditional models of leadership and leadership for women; Research on Leadership and Women With Disabilities; group leadership; empowerment and participation.
- Formation and development of groups for women with disabilities including: how to form a group; Networking; Group Building; Recruiting Members; Management Models; and Management Committee Responsibilities; Conducting Meetings; Agendas; Minutes; The Decision Making Process; Managing Conflict; Negotiation and Mediation; Incorporation; Auspicing; Taxation Exemption; Basic Bookkeeping; Publicity and lobbying.
- Funding Issues including potential sources of funding for groups; applying for funding; information on grant making organisations.

- Information and guidelines on how local groups of women with disabilities can become affiliated with Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA); how to become a formal branch of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA); membership information.

Once completed, the Leadership and Mentoring resource Kit will be made available to WWDA State, Territory and Regional Groups and will also be made available for purchase by other organisations.

In December 1998, the President of WWDA, Ms Vicki Toovey, presented a Workshop about 'Women With Disabilities and Leadership' at the Fourth International Conference on Women and Leadership which was held in Perth. The Workshop was very successful with several delegates taking up WWDA membership following the Conference.

During the past year, WWDA has developed a number of funding submissions to various grants programs to try and secure funding for an expansion of WWDA's Leadership and Mentoring Program for Women With Disabilities. Several WWDA members have requested Leadership and Mentoring Training in an effort to further develop their confidence and skills in order to undertake representation work for WWDA. In late September 1999, WWDA developed a funding submission to the National Women's NGO Funding Program (Project Stream) for a National Leadership and Mentoring Workshop for Women With Disabilities and is currently awaiting a decision. Also in late September 1999, WWDA developed a submission for funding to the Paul Newman Foundation for Leadership and Mentoring Training Workshops in each State/Territory. The decision on successful applicants will be known later in the year. WWDA also developed a funding submission to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (Office of Disability) for a Leadership and Mentoring Program for WWDA. Unfortunately this submission was not successful.

During the past year, some of WWDA's more experienced members have worked with other women with disabilities in a one-to-one mentoring relationship to assist them to develop skills and confidence to take on representation work for WWDA. Much of this work has occurred on an informal and unpaid basis, and has relied on the goodwill of both the mentors and the mentorees. WWDA will continue to pursue funding opportunities to enable the development of a more formalised Leadership and Mentoring Program for the organisation.

GOAL 5: To continue to establish and support WWDA groups and national WWDA Networks around the country.

The WWDA National Office has been restricted somewhat in meeting this goal during the past year and this is mostly due to lack of resources. The workload of the National Office has increased significantly over the last 12 months and the demands on the National Office are great. It needs to be recognised that WWDA's funding only allows for 1 Executive Officer position and 1 part time Bookkeeper position. It also needs to be made clear that none of WWDA's State/Territory branches are funded and WWDA National's funding does not enable State/Territory WWDA groups to be financially supported by WWDA National.

WWDA has focused its efforts over the past year on two major projects to assist the State and Territory WWDA groups. These are the WWDA Information Technology Project and the WWDA Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit Project. It is hoped that these 2 projects will assist in developing the infrastructures necessary to strengthen and better support the WWDA State and Territory groups. Both projects should be completed by the end of 1999.

WWDA has also recognised the need to secure funding to assist in the further development of WWDA State/Territory groups. To this end, WWDA has applied to several funding bodies seeking funding to conduct Leadership and Mentoring Training Workshops for the State/Territory WWDA groups. WWDA has applied to:

- The Paul Newman Foundation;
- The Office of Disability (Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services);
- The National Women's NGO Funding Program (Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women)

Despite the fact that the WWDA State/Territory groups are unfunded and work on a voluntary basis, some of the groups have made good progress over the last year. Included in this report are separate reports from each of the WWDA State/Territory groups.

GOAL 6: To increase the membership and public profile of WWDA.

WWDA has continued to raise its public profile amongst all sectors and levels of the community in order to increase the organisations membership and better meet the needs of women with disabilities in Australia. The public profile of WWDA has increased substantially over the last 12 months. This is reflected in the increasing number and diversity of phone calls, faxes, correspondence and e-mails coming into the organisation. WWDA receives a large number of requests for information – these requests come from individual women with a disability; from organisations; from government agencies; from voluntary groups; from the private sector and also from people studying at schools, colleges and universities. WWDA has had over 400 new members in the last 12 months.

WWDA's increasing profile can be evidenced by the number of forums, consultations and processes WWDA is invited to have input into. Due to resource constraints, there are only so many of these invitations WWDA can take up, and those which WWDA does participate in, reflect the organisations priority areas and members concerns. Information under Goal 3 of this report provides detail of the forums, consultations and processes WWDA has participated in during the past year.

Over the last 12 months, WWDA has taken up opportunities wherever possible to present papers at Conferences, or other public forums. Naturally, resource constraints have restricted WWDA's opportunities in this area. Some of the Conferences/Forums where WWDA has been able to promote its work have included:

- National Workshop on the Theory and Practice of Representation on Australian Politics;
- Fourth International Conference on Women and Leadership;
- International Women's Day Public Rally Queensland;
- Keynote address to the Annual General Meeting of the YWCA;
- Keynote address to the National Disability Advisory Council;
- Attorney Generals NGO's Human Rights Forum;
- International Conference on Education (NSW);
- International Women's Health Conference, Scotland (June 99);
- Australian Association of Women's Health Practitioners Conference;
- Women's Action Rights Network Human Rights Tribunal (May 99);

WWDA has used its Newsletter to help increase the membership and public profile of the organisation. The Newsletter has expanded in content and provides detailed information about WWDA's current

activities and ways members can participate in the organisation. Issue 15 of the WWDA Newsletter (Dec 1998) contained an Evaluation Survey which readers could fill out, giving suggestions for ways WWDA can continue to improve the Newsletter. Issue 16 (June 1999) featured the inclusion of a WWDA Skills Register which readers could fill in. This information has since been collated into a Database which the organisation can use when seeking women with disabilities to undertake representation work for WWDA. The WWDA Newsletter has been a successful mechanism to attract new members. The Newsletter is now sent to a wide range of international organisations and this has assisted in increasing WWDA's profile at an international level. WWDA has received several phone calls, emails and letters from recipients of the WWDA Newsletters congratulating WWDA on the quality and relevance of the Newsletter.

The development of a website for WWDA early in 1999 has been another important mechanism in raising the public profile of the organisation and assisting in attracting new members. WWDA has registered the website with international and Australian based Internet search facilities and has also advertised and promoted the site through established e-mail discussion groups, as well as other informal email networks. WWDA has received very positive feedback from individuals and organisations on the usefulness of the site.

WWDA has continued to raise the public profile of the organisation at an international level. In January 99, WWDA participated in a survey being undertaken by Mobility International USA, and also provided information about WWDA to be included in the 1998 Edition of the International publication for women with disabilities, entitled: Loud, Proud and Passionate. At the international level, some of the major organisations with which WWDA has established links include:

- Disabled Women's Network Canada;
- Commission on Gender Equality, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Canadian Women's Health Network
- Global Fund for Women
- World Institute on Disability
- The Assembly of People With Disabilities New Zealand
- Disability Awareness in Action (UK)
- Mobility International USA
- American Association of People With Disabilities (USA)
- Centre for Independent Living (USA)
- The Hesperian Foundation (USA)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (USA)
- Berkley Planning Associates (USA)
- Centre for Research on Women With Disabilities (USA)
- National Organisation on Disability (USA)
- Through the Looking Glass (USA)
- Council of Canadians with Disability (Canada)
- Disabled People's International (Canada)
- Canadian Abilities Foundation
- National Collective of Women's Refuges (New Zealand)
- Disabled Women's Development Office (Johannesburg)

WWDA has joined a number of email lists and networks in order to promote the organisation, distribute information, and seek input to various activities and processes being undertaken by WWDA. Some of the email lists WWDA participates in include:

- the OZADVOCACY list, which deals with issues relating to disability advocacy;

- the AUSFEMPOLNET list, which deals with feminism and politics in Australia;
- PAMELA'S LIST which is administered by the Pamela Denoon Trust and is made up of the majority of national women's organisations;
- EMILY'S LIST
- DDA LIST which is administered by the DDA Standards Project;
- Cal-WILD (California – Women's International Linkage on Disability)

As well as those activities already discussed in this report, other profile raising activities and strategies over the past year have included:

- development and distribution of flyers promoting WWDA reports etc;
- development and dissemination of a WWDA Publications Order Form
- publishing reports, journal articles, newsletter articles, conference papers etc;
- subscribing to relevant organisations;
- developing mailing lists and databases of relevant agencies and organisations and mailing out promotional material about WWDA;
- participating in relevant Information Days; community expos etc;
- having promotional materials about WWDA available at national conferences;
- inserting WWDA promotional material into mailouts of other organisations;
- distributing WWDA pamphlets and membership forms to key points in the community;
- distributing WWDA materials to schools and tertiary institutions.

GOAL 7: To further improve the organisational system and structure so as to best serve WWDA's membership and its aims and objectives.

WWDA is a relatively young organisation. Many organisational systems and structures are in place and functioning effectively and efficiently. Over the last 12 months, WWDA has continued to develop and improve its organisation policies and procedures, and implement systems to reflect the growth and changing needs of the organisation. During the past year, WWDA has developed a range of operational policies and procedures to support and guide the work of the organisation. The Policies developed to date have included:

- Personnel Policy
- Conflict Resolution Policy
- Access and Equity Policy
- Policy on Volunteers
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Industrial Democracy Policy
- Termination of Employment Policy

WWDA has also developed Employment Contracts for any new staff as well as Contracts for Consultants. The WWDA 1999-2000 Strategic Plan identifies several operational policies to be developed in the coming year, including Policy on Representation. WWDA has utilised a number of Standards Manuals to guide its work in the development of operational policies and procedures. As

there are no specific Standards for Disability Advocacy organisations in Australia, WWDA has adapted existing Standards and these have included:

- Disability Service Standards
- National Mental Health Standards
- Women's Health Service Standards
- Standards for Community Health and Other Primary Health Care Services (CHASP)

In late 1998, WWDA undertook a review of the Position Descriptions for the organisation. Several new Position Descriptions were developed, which better reflect the needs of the organisational and are in keeping with the Social And Community Services Award under which WWDA staff operate. Position Descriptions have been developed for Executive Officer; Bookkeeper; Administrative Assistant; and Project Officer. Position Descriptions now cover: Position Title; Organisation; Classification; Award; Employment Conditions; Function; Primary Tasks; Level of Responsibility; Knowledge and Skills/Selection Criteria; Desirable Knowledge and Skills.

In late 98, WWDA updated and further developed a Human Resources Package for the organisation. Information in this Package included:

- Roles and Responsibilities of WWDA National Executive Committee Members (including Legal Obligations; Financial Management; Industrial Relations; Ethical Issues; Operational Issues; Policy Development)
- Roles and Responsibilities of NEC Office Bearers
- Roles and Responsibilities of the WWDA Executive Officer
- Reporting Procedures and Techniques
- Sample Quarterly Reporting Process
- Appraisal System
- Annual Appraisal Proforma
- Examples of Position Descriptions and Selection Criteria
- Example of a Contract of Employment
- Policies

In late 1998, WWDA developed an Orientation Kit for the organisation. This Kit was also provided to all State and Territory WWDA groups for their use. The Orientation Kit contains the following:

- WWDA National Office Contact Information
- Background to WWDA
- About Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
- Membership of WWDA
- Funding
- WWDA Auditors
- Management of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
- WWDA National Executive Committee Members
- WWDA Policy and Program Areas
- WWDA Organisational Affiliations
- National Peak Disability Organisations
- Orientation to the WWDA National Office (including location; meeting rooms; car parking; office hours; telephone system; office equipment; staff meetings; progress reports; policy and procedure manual; position descriptions; time sheets; performance review and development; etc).

In early, WWDA was required to find a bigger office space. The organisation had grown so quickly that the existing office space had become far too crowded and small. WWDA was able to negotiate with the Canberra Business Centre to move into a larger office space at a fixed rental rate for the coming two years. It is envisaged that if WWDA continues to expand at its current rate, it will need to move to a bigger office space again within the next 12 months. During the last year, the WWDA National Office has had some changes in relation to staffing. Di McGowan, WWDA's bookkeeper for over 3 years, resigned in November 98. Following Di's resignation, WWDA undertook a review of the financial systems of the organisation. In December 98, a new bookkeeper, Ms Helen Mattick was employed to assume the responsibility for bookkeeping. In November 98, WWDA began the process of appointing a Project Officer to undertake the Leadership and Mentoring Project. A Project Officer was employed but unfortunately resigned due to ill health shortly after her appointment. Ms Eddie Wadick continues to work approximately 4 hours per week in the National WWDA Office. Unfortunately, WWDA was unable to find any funding assistance to keep Eddie on following the end of her Jobstart placement, so her hours had to be significantly reduced.

WWDA is committed to striving towards best practice operations, both in organisational and operational practices, and also in the development of best practice approaches to projects and activities. During the past year, WWDA's commitment to best practice at the organisational and operational level can be evidenced by:

- the development of a Strategic/Business Plan which sets out key and continuing strategies, targets and timelines, resource implications, indicators of performance and major outputs for each goal area. Each goal area is supported by a goal statement.
- the development of organisational and operational policies and procedures to support and guide the work of the organisation.
- The use of Standards Processes (such as the Disability Service Standards and the Community Health Accreditation Standards Program – CHASP) to guide the work of the organisation and give benchmarks of best practice;
- staff selection, staff training and staff performance review and development are other areas where WWDA is committed to best practice operations. WWDA has a commitment to providing employment and training opportunities for women with disabilities, including volunteers. This means that where possible, WWDA employs women with disabilities to conduct projects, undertake consultations etc. Women with disabilities manage WWDA projects and programs and provide consultancy services to the organisation as required. In this area, WWDA is able to demonstrate a model of best practice by linking its philosophical position on employment of women with disabilities to its practice. WWDA undertakes Performance Review and Development of its paid staff on an annual basis. This process enables staff to identify their training requirements and paths for future career development.
- The development of a WWDA Human Resources Package and a WWDA Orientation Kit for the organisation;
- the development of roles and responsibility statements for members of the National Executive Committee. This provides role clarification and delineation for the NEC, particularly the Office Bearers and facilitates communication between NEC members.

WWDA is very committed to the development of models of best practice in its work with, and for, women with disabilities. Just some of the examples of approaches towards models of best practice in projects and other activities over the past year can be demonstrated by:

- the establishment of Project Steering and Management Committees which are made up of women with disabilities;
- the employment of women with disabilities as Project Consultants and Project Managers;

- the provision of information in alternative formats in order to provide and promote equity of access to information for women with disabilities;
- the use of WWDA's Model Process for the Development of Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans – by women's refuges and other services as a model of best practice;
- the development of strategic alliances with the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET) to develop best practice guidelines for domestic violence sector workers when dealing with women with disabilities who have experienced violence (or who are at risk of experiencing violence);
- the establishment of a National Women With Disabilities and Violence Reference Group, made up of women with disabilities and a National Women With Disabilities and Violence Network;
- conducting National issue based workshops which demonstrate models of best practice in relation to participation of women with disabilities;
- the development of consultative structures and mechanisms which facilitate maximum participation by women with disabilities;
- the development of a WWDA website which is a model of best practice in design and content (including compliance with Website Accessibility Guidelines developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the AUS Standards for Web Design, both endorsed by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission);
- the development of a funding submission to the Business Against Domestic Violence Initiative to undertake a project which will educate women with disabilities about domestic violence and its prevention by developing a model of best practice in education;
- the development of a funding submission to the Business and Community Partnerships Grants Program to develop a model of best practice in fostering partnerships between non-government organisations and the corporate sector;
- developing a funding submission to the Telecommunications Representation Grants Program to undertake research and improve representation of women with disabilities on Telecommunications Industry Forums.

WWDA State and Territory Group Reports

WWDA Northern Territory Report – By Joyce Deering

It has been a different year for Northern Territory members. In the disability area, Territory health services is endeavouring to bring about drastic changes to funding, from organisational based funding to consumer focused funding. Not an easy task but one that will be for the better in the long run, no matter how long it takes. There are still many forums, consultations, and surveys to be attended or filled in, including some of WWDA's projects this year, including the Telecommunications Survey which has been well received on its completion.

The Territory Disability Standards were drafted and re-drafted by Territory health services over the past year and it is expected that International Day of Disabled Persons will see the launch of these Standards on 3rd December 1999.

As Vice President and Treasurer, and now Acting Chairperson, it has been a valuable year. I was recently able to spend one and a half days in Canberra meeting with our Executive officer, Carolyn Frohmader in the Canberra Business Centre in Downer where WWDA has its office. We discussed finances and the current position in the need for seeking additional funding from non-government sources as specified in our contract with the Department of Family and Community Services. I can assure you is always very busy, never dull in the WWDA Office. Phone and fax calls were constant.

Our Northern Territory group meets as part of Integrated Disability Action and I keep them informed of current WWDA projects and issues.

WWDA Queensland Report – By Karin Swift

As I sit here to write this report, I cannot help but be amazed at how fast this year has gone and I cannot help but feel a little sad at the fact that Queensland has not yet fully formed a State group. Since March this year I have experienced chronic illness and have been hospitalised 5 times. The average time of each hospitalisation has been 3 weeks. This has been a new experience for me as previous to this year I have been quite a healthy person. I have had to get used to being part of the medical system and all that it entails. Each time I have been in hospital it has taken me up to three weeks to recover and it has only been in the past month that I have been able to get back to my usual self and resume my usual level of activity. This has heavily impacted on my ability to perform my function as WWDA State Representative of Queensland as well as my role of one of the Vice Presidents on the NEC. This report will focus on my attempts to establish a group and other activities I have done on behalf of WWDA.

In the latter part of '98 and the earlier part of '99 I networked and had two meetings with two small groups of women with disabilities in Brisbane. These meetings were successful to a degree as we were able to identify other women we knew and even think of things the group could focus on and other people we knew throughout the State. We were meant to have a strategic planning meeting with Lesley Chenoweth, a lecturer from the University of Queensland, but this kept on being cancelled due to my recurring illness.

I believe as an NEC we really need to reflect whether State groups is the best way to gain input from women with disabilities throughout the country. My experience tends to indicate that people were keen to have a State group at first, however, when I became sick, no one ran with the idea and did what needed to be done (either because they chose not to or were not in a position to). The other major contributing factor is that it is very difficult (if not impossible) to establish a Statewide network without resources and infrastructure. I would really like to know how some of the other more successful groups have managed. There is light at the end of the tunnel however. A group of people in Queensland has recently received funding to establish a network called Queenslander's with Disability Network. This aims to be a network which brings people with disability together as a collective voice so that they become politically active and have a presence. This project will have paid community networkers whose job will be to travel around Queensland and establish groups. I feel this organisation has much potential to establish a voice for women with disability as they have the resources, energy and skills. I will keep WWDA posted as I have applied for two of the positions within this organisation.

Now, onto things I have done for WWDA this year. In November 1998, I represented WWDA at a Consumer Health Forum Conference, entitled "Choosing Your Medicines". This was a very interesting experience as the hotel was completely inaccessible and I use an electric scooter for mobility. Consumer Health Forum and I were very angry and embarrassed as I had to go home early due to the fact that I could not participate. This resulted in Consumer Health Forum assisting me to put a DDA Action against the Hotel.

In March this year I was invited in my capacity as WWDA State Representative to give a speech at the International Women's Day Rally in Brisbane about the effects of the GST on women with disabilities. This was an excellent opportunity to voice the concerns of women with disabilities and the speech received a rousing reception.

In August this year I was meant to participate in the Women's Round Table and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation half-day Workshop for women. However, both these events were abruptly cancelled and have been rescheduled for later in the year.

That is all I have to report about activities in Queensland. My apologies once again for there not being an established group in Queensland. May I suggest that as there is not yet a group in Queensland that I be co-opted as a member of the National Executive Committee for the 1999-2000 year.

Victorian Women with Disabilities Network Report – By Keran Howe

The network continues to concentrate its efforts in a number of key areas and collective members have shared responsibility for networking and co-ordination of specific task groups to ensure our efforts are most effectively placed. The Annual General Meeting in November elected Lindy Corbett to the position of Convenor, Pamela Menere to the position of Treasurer and Keran Howe as the Victorian representative to the Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) National Executive Committee. The meeting was addressed by Lesley Hall from the Attendant Care Coalition speaking on Alternative Models of Individualised Care. This year the Collective has held quarterly general meetings.

The Newsletter

This year we were not successful in receiving a grant for postage costs for our newsletter but continue to provide a newsletter for our 265 members until the production costs are beyond our means. The newsletter provides an opportunity and often the only means for many women to stay in touch with the network around Victoria. Funding is currently being sought from philanthropic trusts to establish a website for the network that will provide another means of linking women to the network.

Women with Disabilities and Violence

Keran Howe has continued to represent VWDN on the Woorara Working Group, and has been part of a delegation that has met with the Manager of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and a representative of Disability Services to encourage the two departments to consider a co-ordinated approach to the issues for women with disabilities experiencing violence and requiring support. A proposal for a project to address issues for women with disabilities experiencing violence has been submitted to the Victorian Department of Human Services and is still awaiting notice of the outcome. The delegation has also met with the Director of the Office of Women's Affairs to highlight the need for cross-departmental work in relation to women with disabilities experiencing violence. Input was provided to a Victorian Government discussion paper on 'whole of government approaches to domestic violence.

The Book Group

Margaret Cooper, Janny Ryan, Bernadette Zen, Betty Bone, Karen Hanson, Di Temby, Lesley Hall and Glen Tomasetti have worked together on a book of women's experiences of disabilities. The book is now ready to be printed and Margaret Cooper is co-ordinating seeking appropriate funding. Donations of \$10,000 toward publication costs have been received and further funding is sought from philanthropic trusts. The book is the result of the efforts of a number of women who attended a series of workshops in developing the writing skills they require to tell their own story.

International Conference on Women's Health

Di Temby and Keran Howe represented women with disabilities at the International Interdisciplinary Conference on Women's Health in Edinburgh in July. Di presented a paper on Women with Disabilities and Ageing and Keran presented a display of the findings of the Woorara DDA Action Plan. The

conference provided an opportunity to network around issues for women with disabilities within the women's health sector.

WWDA Australian Capital Territory Report – By Diana Palmer

The ACT Group has had an expansive year in the last twelve months. Our current funding last year came from HealthPACT and the Canberra Zonta Club. The HealthPACT funding was granted in 1997-98 to enable us to conduct a series of talks in each month to assist our members to take control of their lives and make informed decisions about matters of importance. We applied to continue the series of talks in 1998-99 as we had received the money well into the financial year and did not have sufficient time to complete the program of talks. Permission was granted.

The talks covered topics such as:

- Effective Self Defence,
- Women's Legal Service,
- Aboriginal Cultural Use of plants and the impact on Indigenous people as a result of the impact of white settlement.
- Outward Bound, (we may ask them to run an Outward Bound camp for our members).
- Disability Discrimination Act, the powers of this law and how it may be used by individuals.
- Massage and relaxation for pain relief.

A funding grant by the Zonta Club enabled us to conduct a Stress and Fatigue Management Survey. The Study consisted of fifteen individual interviews by our consultant. These interviews were supplemented by three focus groups. The members in our Group were far fewer than the number of people required for the proposal and we began to enlist the interest of other women with disabilities. The search for participants in this Survey increased our public image as we had to use as much advertising as we could possibly tap into with as small an outlay as possible. We had about twenty women involved in the Survey and concluded the program with a luncheon where women received a payment for the expert contribution they had made. We believed that too frequently women and men with disabilities provide useful contributions to important discussions on disability but as they are not specialists it is accepted without acknowledgement.

For the coming year we have a grant from Health PACT for a survey on Health and Welfare. In addition we obtained \$1000 from the Tradesmen's Union Club to run our years program of monthly meetings where we will arrange general topic guest speakers and outings.

During the year the Chief Minister sponsored about six organisations to open a web site. We are now on line and our address is: www.actcommunity.org/womenwd/wwd.htm

Sue Salthouse, our Secretary did not apply for re-election as she has given far too much of her time since becoming our Secretary. The Group has grown enormously with Sue's help and we trust that she will continue as a member. At our last meeting we had about four women who attended the meeting for the first time. We hope that these women will decide to become members. We find that people join but because we have meetings on Saturday afternoon they have family commitments. Therefore although they pay their subscriptions we do not have them present at the meetings.

During the year our members have participated in government and private sector meetings and our presence is becoming well recognised at these meetings. Despite all these positives we have gaps in our

membership profile. We are not sufficiently strong to have separate Northside and Southside groups. Nor do we have sufficient young people to begin a younger women's group. I believe that only by enabling younger women to organise their own interests into meetings will we attract them.

We are working closely with the Government Women's Health Unit to make it more friendly to women with disabilities. The most important initial step that has not occurred is to include on all papers that women fill in on visiting the Women's Screening Unit is to answer whether they have a disability. There is a question where women identify if they experience domestic violence. Disability is often invasive and must be acknowledged by the admission form questions.

We have begun the initiative of mentoring members to undertake Group work with confidence. Sue Salthouse has been working with one of our members who nominated Women With Disabilities ACT as her field work placement. They work together well and have a good atmosphere. I have been taking another of the members to meetings where we both present a united front and the topics we discuss for our membership have the greater depth of two heads being wiser than one.

We look forward with expectation to the coming year.

WWDA Newcastle Report – By Dallas Barwick

This is my second report as the Convenor of the Newcastle Group. WWDN is well into its third year of operation and has become a well-known Service Provider, a respected and valuable part of the community here in the Hunter area. As I stated in my last report the most important achievement of the Newcastle group lies in the change, growth and development and enhanced quality of life in its members which attests to its success.

WWDN has over 60 women on the mailing list and 20 to 30 of these attend regularly. This is the third year of WWDN in Newcastle it has been both a good year and a bad year. WWDN continues to grow – new inquiries from both women with a disability and service providers still come in weekly. The women themselves continue to grow and are taking a more active part in the meetings. I started a Leadership and Mentoring Program -this year, each month one of the members takes the meeting – this has been enthusiastically received, indeed this has been so successful that I have a waiting list! I have not been, able to attend any meetings this year due to failing health. Vickie Haslam has overseen the meetings and gives any assistance necessary. I give both Vickie and the volunteer leader a list of things needed to be discussed or shared and any other relevant information. It is very good to see that though I am not there, the meetings continue. Having a planning night once yearly has helped me to develop a program for the entire year, to book speakers and plan activities. Everything flows smoothly and makes it very easy for the running of the meetings.

Activities in 1999

- WWDN has continued with Oral Histories with four women sharing their story – this is an ongoing project.
- A cultural night on women's customs around the world.
- WWDN celebrated its third birthday with a Masked and Costumed Ball
- A Sexuality Workshop.
- A short film night – "Talk About It" a short film on sexual assault. "House Gang" which was filmed on SBS television. These films were an introduction to our speaker for the following month.
- The special event for this year was Guest Speaker Ruth Cromer who is both an Actress and Advocate. Ruth is an absolute inspiration – very focused and aware, at the age of 28 she has accomplished so much both in the acting field and in the disability area. The night was fantastic by all accounts.

This month Noah Costello from the Department of Aging and Disability will be at the meeting to ask for input into the planning and development for the Hunter areas and what they consider to be gaps in the service.

WWDN has attended the International Women's Day March and will attend the Reclaim the Night Rally later in the year. WWDN will join with Newcastle Community Access (NCA) in the Mattara Festival in Newcastle. NCA received funding to make a Float to highlight the issues of Disability. Consumers of NCA will march with their flag, their Drama group will be putting on a play. WWDN was asked to join in. Ten of our members will march carrying our own banner. This is a very important event and a good opportunity for WWDN to participate in the community.

Vickie Haslam is still on the Area Violence Against Women Committee. Vickie has also attended a Mental Health Forum as a Guest Speaker. The subject was violence against women and she also spoke about WWDN.

It has been a very busy year but the lack of finance is placing WWDN in the position that if funding is not found this very valuable and successful group will have to fold next year. A number of submissions have been put in but with no success, the funding dollars are getting scarcer each year and with so many seeking funding it is very hard to find a source of finance. Newcastle Community Access has up to this year supported WWDN with stamps, paper, envelopes etc. NCA also provide volunteers to do pick ups, set up halls. This year NCA has also suffered a loss of some funding and can only supply a little assistance. WWDN has to support itself but this costs money. This includes rent of venue which has gone from \$20 per month to \$22; stamps which cost \$60, supper, TV hire as needed \$20, phone which I basically carry; this month the WWDN component was \$80. I have funded these costs by chocolate drives which is a very difficult way to raise money, the last two drives money was not bought in therefore WWDN is down to going month by month. NCA donated last months rent – this month the rent has been donated by Rewa and Margery Richardson who have been volunteers. Currently a Raffle is underway. Christine Timson, one of our members has worked very hard to contact businesses to donate prizes and the result has been fantastic. As all prizes have been donated any proceeds will go to WWDN. Though this will eventually bring in some funds it is only a stopgap measure. As my health is continuing to decline I cannot keep doing chocolate drives, raffles and I cannot continue to bear the rest of the costs myself. The group has been informed of this. The cost per meeting have been increased to \$2 per night to help cover the cost of hall hire and supper. Unfortunately the mention of financial matters and the increase in cost per meeting has resulted in a drop off in attendance over the last two months.

It is a very sad position to be in, on one hand to see the growth and the obvious success of WWDN and on the other hand to realise that without funding it is impossible to continue. Unfortunately there is no one in the group who could take over the position of Convenor of the Newcastle Group. I am still hopeful that we will find a way to continue. We have not given up yet and continue to seek ways to fund the group.

WWDA South Australia Report – By Chandra Sluggett

We have a focus group of about 8-10 people. We were meeting every two months until May this year. Due to my being injured on the left side (Polio affected side) from a car accident in July, I have had difficulty maintaining commitment to running of our group therefore has not met since May. Regrettably, I have had to prioritise maintaining commitment to attending the committees and workshops when possible and to my job instead.

We held a fund raising/membership drive in May. Raised enough money to pay for a Post Box and some left over. We have a new members but the current active list is yet to be collated. Address: WWDA – SA Development Group, PO Box 1358, Unley, SA 5061. WWDA – SA is an active member of WorkCover Disability Focus Group and Working Women’s Centre Management Committee.

Our Challenge

Due to lack of funds and resources we have not able to achieve what we wanted to and have difficulty moving forward as a group. Many of us have number of other commitments eg jobs, studies, family and home responsibilities, and membership with and to number of other committees and groups. This coupled with costs associated with managing a disability eg transport, health, access, etc meant many are not in a position to provide the support as often as needed or likes to. This difficulty also has meant, we haven’t been able to accept invitations to attend workshops and functions where there has been a cost involved. These invitations came about as a direct involvement in various committees such as above. This has further limited our capacity to ‘market’ WWDA – SA to attract corporate dollars and donations from various organisations, maintain links and network. Although WWDA-SA is contacted often for various reasons, by individuals and organisations, we are experiencing difficulties in responding to calls and issues due to the above difficulties. I am sure other State and Territory groups are experiencing the same.

WWDA (SA) recently participated by Judith Harris and self, in the, ‘Review of existing advisory structures informing the South Australian government on women’s issues in general and training and employment in particular for Department of Education Training and Employment.

WWDA Tasmania Report – By Sue Large

The Tasmanian Group has been very quiet this year mainly because many of our members have been involved with other groups and projects. Ann Storr has been involved with National WWDA Office on The Leadership and Mentoring Project which WWDA received funding for from the Global Fund for Women. This project has been running for most of the year and we hope to see the completed Resource Manual in the very near future.

Sue Large have been attending meetings for The Work to Retirement Steering Committee. A more extensive report is included within the papers for the Annual General Meeting. Jenny Stanzel has recently been appointed to The Australian Communications Industry Forum. This committee meets quarterly in various states. Their aim is to address technical, consumer and operational issues affecting Australia’s communication facilities and services and the development of innovative and cost effective communication services. The ACIF charter has several components but the main one for WWDA is to ensure that women with disabilities are represented on the Disability Advisory Forum and their issues brought to the attention of the ACIF and addressed appropriately.

We have also applied for funding auspiced by the Hobart Women’s Health Centre. The preliminary aim of this project is to conduct exploratory, qualitative research into health issues and the unmet health needs of Tasmanian Women with Disabilities. It is expected that there will be many different spin-offs from this project.

We look forward to being more active and meeting more regularly in the year two thousand.

WWDA Representatives Reports

Disability Discrimination Standards Project Steering Committee – By Joyce Deering

I have attended 3 meetings of this Committee since becoming WWDA's representative in December 1998. All meetings have been held in Sydney – in December 1998, May 1999 and September 1999 – in two venues, neither of which could meet Access Standards in necessary areas.

There is still plenty of work to be done on most Standards. The Transport Standard was agreed to at a meeting of all Transport Ministers in Adelaide in April. As yet no Government has adopted the Standards. It is hoped that the Draft Standards will be presented to Federal Cabinet in a submission from the Transport Minister John Anderson with support from the Attorney General and the Minister for Family and Community Services. The Australian Bus and Coach Association is still not happy and using its muscle. People with disabilities need to be politically active with local Members to ensure this Standards does not get lost.

There has been a re-write of the Draft Education Standards. Joan Hume was WWDA's representative on the Education Standard Committee and did much of the input. Joan has now resigned. The Discussion Papers on Disability Discrimination in Education are now available.

The Access to Premises Standard is going along slowly. At each meeting we are updated on progress and what is currently being considered. Accessible car parking is a major issue right now. It will be wonderful when this Standard is finally available, adopted and enforced.

There has not been a great deal of action on the Employment Standard in the time I have been attending. There are many stakeholders and vested interests, however we should see some progress before the next meeting.

These DDA Project Meetings are hard going. Two or three day meetings needing concentration requires strong commitment from all participants but the satisfaction of contributing to a real change in community attitudes makes it worth the effort. Two of these DDA Project meetings have co-incided with WWDA Teleconferences – I have been on line from Sydney not Darwin!

National Work to Retirement Project Steering Committee – By Sue Large

The committee is still meeting though the constancy was due to be completed by the end of June 1999. There have been several problems with getting the report completed to the committees satisfaction but most of the problems seem to have been ironed out with what we hope will be the final report.

The consultancy when completed should be a useful resource for people with disabilities who are thinking of retiring or those who work with people with disabilities to give them some insight as to some of the issues faced when by people with disabilities when they are thinking or are forced to retire.

I thank Women with Disabilities for the opportunity to represent them through the Caucus on this very interesting consultancy. We hope to have a final report completed shortly.

Telecommunications Representation – By Margaret Cooper

Women With Disabilities Australia nominated me as representative to the Disability and Consumer Representation project in 1998-99. This project, funded by DOCITA, and auspiced by Blind Citizens' Australia, has just been refunded for another year.

The most important outcome for us was the publication of 'Telecommunications and Women with Disabilities.' Thanks are due to Sue Salthouse for her analysis of a questionnaire worked on by Joyce Deering, Carolyn Frohmader and myself, and are also due to Carolyn who massaged the document into its readable form.

Women With Disabilities Australia took on this piece of research, which has been warmly received by so many, because we have a unique perspective on women with disabilities. Unlike most other national organisations controlled by people with disabilities, Women With Disabilities Australia is not restricted to representing a single diagnostic group. We also believe in the social model of disability, i.e. a hostile environment creates disability. Our research also echoed what women had been saying to us for years, that technology was not user friendly, and it was often unaffordable.

Sue Salthouse and I presented 'Telecommunications and women with Disabilities' to Telstra recently. Being on the Disability and Consumer Representation Project helped us see where other women with disabilities can join telecommunications committees to put our point of view. Carolyn's persistence succeeded in obtaining a DOCITA grant to support our representatives. Now Sue Salthouse represents us on the Telstra Disability Forum and Telstra Disability Equipment Committee and Jenny Stanzel will be joining the Disability Advisory Board of the Australian Communications' Industry Forum. Joyce Deering is already on the regional Telstra Consumer Council. We hope to have enough money to run one teleconference between our representatives 1999-2000 to share goals and strategies.

With your permission I would like to be your representative for one more year on the Disability and Consumer Representation Project.