

Annual Report 1997-1998

WWDA Chairperson's Report – by Vicki Toovey

WWDA is an organisation that I feel immensely privileged to have been involved with over this past year. The impact of this organisation on women's issues and on disability issues is hard to calculate but I believe that it has been fairly momentous. It is a demanding task for an organisation funded on an annual basis to maintain links and credibility in two such key areas but I believe that WWDA has continued to achieve this over the past year. The importance of our need to maintain this level of credibility and linkage is easily highlighted when we reflect on what appears to many of us to be an erosion of commitment to basic human rights and support for the full and equal inclusion of all people within the Australian community. It makes it imperative that we are able to continue to promote our role as women and people with a disability and our place in the community. Promotion of these issues has been continued at a number of levels. Some of these are described here.

Australian Women's Round Table

I attended the Australian Women's Round Table in Canberra in August and made a presentation on the involvement of women with disabilities in research and consultation using the Women and Violence work as an example of good practice. Some 50 women's Non government organisations were represented with the Minister for the Status of Women, Judy Moylan and the Director of the Office of the Status of Women, Prue Goward present.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) National Annual General Meeting

I was invited to speak at the Annual General Meeting of the Young Women's Christian Association. 120 people attended this weekend meeting in Canberra and the theme was diversity and inclusiveness in the leadership and membership of the Young Women's Christian Association. I presented a paper and facilitated a workshop. It is clear that many parts of the Young Women's Christian Association are working with women with disabilities and some links at a local level may be supportive of State WWDA groups.

National Caucus of Consumer Disability Organisations

Caucus continues to be the link between Government and the Consumer Disability Organisations. Major part of discussion at these meetings has a focus on the issue of Standards. WWDA endorsed a statement which is as follows : *“Caucus strongly supports Disability Standards under the Disability Discrimination Act which advance the objects of the Act and endorses the Standards development process. Caucus will work for Standards to ensure equality of access for all people with a disability.”*

The purpose of seeking endorsement of such a statement was to send a clear message to Government of the importance of continuing support for the Standards under the Disability Discrimination Act. WWDA's continued work with the Caucus is important to remain in touch and informed of these issues which impact on the disability community generally.

Violence Research Workshop

This Workshop was another strand in our important work on the issue of violence. It brought together women with disabilities and researchers and created further networks and profile for the issue. The Report will soon be available.

National Disability Advisory Council

WWDA was invited to speak to the National Disability Advisory Council. Margaret Cooper and I

attended the meeting of the National Disability Advisory Council in Melbourne in May. We had identified three key areas to present to the Council – information technology, violence and ageing. I also presented some background information on WWDA and why the need for a women with disabilities organisation looking at statistics, some key issues and our non-medical, broad disability approach. A range of questions was asked and there was a great deal of interest in the issue of violence with members relating their concerns that they had experienced with women being referred back to disability specific services and also the issue of women with disabilities and children and their accommodation.

Priority Achievements

WWDA has been successful in a number of its strategic directions. The issue of violence and women with disabilities has been successfully given attention at many levels and this will continue because of the many layers that we have developed with the Action Plan for Women's Shelters, the Research Workshop, presentations and responses to reviews and consultations.

Information technology and increased access will be addressed in the coming year with the Accessibility Grant. Leadership and mentoring similarly will be supported by the grant from the Global Fund for women.

WWDA's links to the mainstream women's movement have continued to be fostered over the past year through the attention we have given to the issue of violence and other areas. I believe there is a sense now that we won't go away and they do not want us to either!

Many of these achievements are a direct result of the support, planning and continuing commitment provided by the staff of the WWDA office in Canberra. They have a job which is very isolated at times, where they are often put in difficult positions by the nature of the structure of WWDA and the lack of available resources. I can not express fully enough my appreciation of the work that they do on our behalf and how much I value this. WWDA is rich with commitment from these women. I would like to acknowledge the work of Helen Skeat who as Executive Officer set a high standard for WWDA and which Carolyn Frohmader has ably followed. Carolyn's funding submission and report writing skills have been evident to all of us and have brought great rewards for WWDA. Di McGowan and Eddie Waddick have provided much needed administrative support and backup.

Fiona Strahan resigned as the co-vice-president earlier this year. Her presence and strong commitment is greatly missed but we wish her well with her new work and family commitments.

Many women contributed to the ongoing work of WWDA. The women who make up the National Executive Committee and support and facilitate State groups have a major role in managing WWDA and maintaining the community base of WWDA. It is very easy for us to just get caught up in National "big picture" issues and neglect the local work. So I thank those women who do this and we appreciate the effort and commitment that you make. To hear the stories from some of the women from these groups is a great privilege.

Joan Hume, Terry Fletcher, Robin Wilkinson, Helen Meekosha, Pam Menere, Madge Scheraha, Kali Wilde, Karin Swift, Di Temby and Sue Large have played important roles for WWDA either through presentation of papers, membership of committees or work groups. WWDA is represented on:

- Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Task Force on Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards
- Australian National Training Authority
- AUSTEL Consumer Consultative Forum
- Consumer Telecommunications Network
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Data Reference Group
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards Project

- Building and Access Technical Committee
- Building and Access Policy Committee
- Steering Committee of Research Project on Transition from Work to Retirement for people with disabilities
- Attorney General's Human Rights Forum

Issues for the Coming Year

WWDA has made enormous progress over the past couple of years and in particular has had success in attracting grant funding. In looking forward there are several key areas which I believe the organisation needs to consider.

- How to maintain not only the high profile but also the high standard that I believe is now expected for WWDA. In large part this has been due to the exceptional support and forward thinking of the women who have worked for the organisation in our Canberra office. Of continuing concern is how we will be able to manage the extra grant funding without greater support being available at the office level. In particular the organisation needs to look at the level of base grant funding, how this compares with other organisations and how we are able to continue to attract and retain high quality staff considering the current rate of remuneration.
- There is urgent need to review the Constitution of WWDA so that it better supports an organisation which has matured at a rapid rate. The Constitution needs to be able to support the outcomes that we wish to achieve and enable women with disabilities to better participate in the management of WWDA. We need a Constitution which mirrors the way I believe we want to work – that is with women with disabilities being able to actively participate in the organisation at a range of levels.
- The issue of the support and maintenance of State bodies is vital to the credibility of the organisation and the clear presence of an active and committed governing body (the National Executive Committee) which is pivotal to the management of WWDA.

These issues together mean a fairly thorough review of the way we work to ensure that women with disabilities actively participate in the organisation, that there are opportunities for women to participate at the levels they choose to, that women are supported to achieve outcomes for the organisation.

This is quite a challenge but I believe we have the opportunity to address this in the coming year. With the two recent grants there is opportunity to build on and expand support at the state level by enabling women to become actively engaged in WWDA activities. This will enable the building of a firm base from which I hope we can draw future leaders and contributors to the leadership and management of WWDA. I look forward to the continuing work of WWDA and its strong presence in women's and disability issues.

Vicki Toovey
September 1998

WWDA Executive Officer's Report – by Carolyn Frohmader

Introduction

WWDA has grown rapidly over the last 12 months. The work WWDA has done has seen the public profile of the organisation increase dramatically in the last year and this has seen the demands on

WWDA increase considerably. 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 an increase in memberships and requests for information, from both organisations and individuals.

The last 12 months have seen some significant changes and achievements for WWDA. At the 1997 Annual General Meeting, Vicki Toovey was elected as WWDA's new Chairperson and in March 98, Helen Skeat, WWDA's Executive Officer for over 3 years left to take up a new position as the Coordinator of the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET). Carolyn Frohmader, having been employed by WWDA as the part time Policy and Research Officer in October 97, took over the position as Acting Executive Officer following Helen's departure.

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

Program Area: Violence Against Women With Disabilities

Groundbreaking work has been undertaken by WWDA during the last year in the area of violence against women with disabilities. The issue of violence against women with disabilities has been consistently identified by WWDA members as a major issue for them. WWDA has responded to the expressed needs of women with disabilities in relation to violence issues by undertaking a range of innovative projects, as well as lobbying government to effect policy and legislative change to protect women with disabilities who experience violence, in all its forms.

WWDA undertook 2 major projects during 1997-98 which focused on women with disabilities' access to women's refuges and violence services. Both these projects, funded by the Office of the Status of Women, were developed to assist government funded refuges and services around Australia to eliminate discrimination by developing and implementing Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans. Both the projects were very exciting for WWDA and a big step forward in the development of the organisation. One of the more empowering aspects of the projects was the fact that women with disabilities were involved all the way through and were in charge of the projects. The reports from the projects – *'More Than Just A Ramp'* and the *'Woorarra Women's Refuge Action Plan'* were published in late 1997 and were publicly launched at the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET) National Conference in December by the Director of the Office of the Status of Women, Ms Pru Goward. The two projects and the reports were widely publicised, including a feature article in the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Newsletter. The projects reports were distributed to every SAAP funded women's refuge in Australia earlier this year, and several women's refuges have since begun to develop Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans as a result. Over 500 copies of the reports were initially printed, however the high level of demand required WWDA to print a further 500 copies.

In February 1998, WWDA organised and ran the first ever national workshop on women with disabilities and violence, which saw representatives from a range of sectors work collaboratively with women with disabilities to develop strategies to combat violence against women with disabilities. The National Women With Disabilities and Violence Workshop was conducted by WWDA in Melbourne, on February 21-22 1998 and was funded by the Office of the Status of Women. Twenty five women attended the Workshop and evaluation of the workshop by the participants demonstrated that the workshop was extremely successful. An Interim Report of the Workshop was written mid year, and the final report is currently being finalised. Some of the main areas where problems were identified and strategies were developed by participants at the workshop included: Education; Research; Information;

Social Action; Networking; Service and Program Planning and Delivery. The Final Report provides detailed strategies which were developed in each of these areas.

The Workshop has had a significant impact and has resulted in a range of activities occurring as a result. This is particularly notable for WWDA given that the Final Report is yet to be published. Many of the Workshop participants have initiated activities in their own services and/or local areas and this has resulted in increased awareness of, and action on, the issue of violence against women with disabilities at State/Territory, regional and local levels. Just one example here includes: a State based rape crisis service conducted a seminar for all refuge and violence workers on ways to promote access and equity in their services for women with disabilities.

As part of the background research and preparation for the National Workshop in February 98, an Information Kit on Women With Disabilities and Violence was developed. Development of the Kit involved a significant amount of research and production. Part of the research for the Kit involved developing an overview of what was happening around Australia in the area of domestic violence prevention generally, and any specific initiatives being undertaken in relation to women with disabilities and violence. Other information provided in the Kit includes: bibliographies; annotated bibliographies; resource information such as Internet sites; articles on women with disabilities and violence; State/Territory crisis services information; and much more.

Earlier this year WWDA developed a submission to the Attorney General's Department who were developing a Model Domestic Violence Law for Australia. A consultative process was undertaken by WWDA to generate input from members into the development of a submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper. This involved organising with the Office of the Status of Women for copies of the Discussion Paper to be produced in braille, so that women with impaired vision could participate in the consultation process. WWDA also liaised with the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET); the National Women's Justice Coalition; and the New South Wales Disability Council in the development of WWDA's submission. WWDA's submission discussed a range of issues which were set out in the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper – and these included definitions (of 'domestic violence'; 'perpetrator'; 'property' etc). WWDA's submission recommended, in part, that in order to be inclusive of women with disabilities, the Model Domestic Violence Law recognise and consider that domestic violence in relation to women with disabilities may take different forms than those which are included in traditional definitions of domestic violence.

In August 98, WWDA developed a submission to the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy, an initiative launched by the Prime Minister in late 1997. Approximately 25 million dollars has been allocated to this initiative, which will run for 3.5 years. The Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Strategy is coordinated by a National Taskforce, with membership made up of representatives from each State/Territory as well as Commonwealth representatives. The role of the Taskforce is to look at and test new ways of addressing and preventing domestic violence, as well as determining national priorities for domestic violence. The first two national projects of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Strategy will be a *Community Education/Awareness Strategy* and the *Development of National Endorsed Competency Standards* for workers with family violence. WWDA's submission provided information and recommendations about how these two projects should be inclusive of women with disabilities. WWDA also met with representatives of the Taskforce in August to lobby for the inclusion of women with disabilities into any projects initiated under the Partnerships Strategy.

In early 98, WWDA participated in a major research project on violence against women being undertaken by Keys Young Research Company in New South Wales and funded through the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women. The social research study aimed to identify reasons why women who experience domestic violence do not report the violence to the police or other violence services. WWDA effectively lobbied the research company to include women with disabilities in their

study. WWDA was then able to act as a broker between the research consultant and women with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence. WWDA located 6 women with disabilities to participate in the study as well as a woman with a disability to be interviewed as a key informant. WWDA was also able to lobby the research company to ensure that all the women with disabilities participating in the study were paid for their time. WWDA was also paid by the Research Company for locating the women to participate.

In January 98, WWDA developed a detailed submission to the Queensland Department of Families, Youth andamp; Community Care who had advertised for a Consultant to undertake a Disability andamp; Domestic Violence Project. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in securing the project, which went to a Queensland based Consultancy group. However, the successful applicant has been liaising closely with WWDA regarding the project.

In July 98, WWDA was invited to present a paper at the New South Wales Women's Refuge Movement State Conference. Karen Swift, a WWDA member from Brisbane who has done some work on violence against women with disabilities, presented a paper on Women With Disabilities and Violence on behalf of WWDA. Karin's presentation provided an overview of WWDA, of women with disabilities and violence; and practical strategies services can implement in order to improve access to services for women with disabilities. This paper was extremely successful, with the Conference organisers requesting permission to distribute the paper to all women's refuges, violence and sexual assault services in New South Wales.

Program Area: Leadership and Mentoring for Women With Disabilities

WWDA held a Leadership Workshop late in 1997. The proceedings of the Workshop were videotaped and a report was developed from the tapes. Participants at the Workshop developed several recommendations and strategies around women with disabilities and leadership/mentoring. Some of the areas where strategies were developed included: Mentoring; Showing Leadership to Mainstream Organisations; Community Education; Representation; Information Technology; Extending the Reach of WWDA.

It was recognised at the WWDA Leadership Workshop that in order to address several of the recommendations and implement the strategies that were developed, WWDA would need to secure discrete project funding. In March 98, WWDA developed a funding submission to the Global Fund for Women, an organisation based in the United States of America. The Global Fund for Women focuses primarily on female human rights and provides a small grants program for women's organisations which are based outside the United States. WWDA requested \$14,500 from the Global Fund for Women in order to develop a Mentoring Package and Program for women with disabilities in Australia. WWDA was notified in August 98 that its submission was successful and the Global Fund for Women had funded WWDA\$15,000 United States dollars to carry out activities in the area of leadership and mentoring.

WWDA will continue its work in the area of leadership when it presents a paper on Women With Disabilities and Leadership at the Fourth International Leadership Conference in December in Western Australia. WWDA has also negotiated with the Office of Disability for Conference funding to enable several women with disabilities to attend the Conference as delegates.

Program Area: Information Technology

WWDA has undertaken a significant amount of work in this area over the last 12 months. WWDA members have consistently expressed their concerns over their lack of access to information

technologies, particularly the Internet. In the past year, WWDA has developed several submissions for funding to address these concerns, and has had considerable success in this area.

In January 98, WWDA developed a proposal to the National Disability Research Agenda Grants Program (Office of Disability, Department of Health and Family Services) for an information technology research project. The aim of the project was to work with women with disabilities (all disability types) to investigate the specific requirements which will enable and promote their access to the Internet and associated technologies. Although this submission was unsuccessful, several of the successful applicants have contacted WWDA to request WWDA's input to their projects.

Earlier this year, WWDA wrote to the Office of the Status of Women to request a small amount of funding to conduct an Introductory Internet Workshop for women with disabilities as part of the Annual General Meeting. WWDA was able to secure \$5,000 for such a Workshop. The Introductory Internet Workshop will be conducted following the Annual General Meeting and is designed to provide a general overview of the Internet and the possibilities it presents for women with disabilities.

In early 98, WWDA developed a proposal for funding to the Networking the Nation Program. The proposal was to look at the telecommunications needs of women with disabilities in remote areas and to provide education and training in the use of information technology (particularly the Internet). WWDA met several times with the Networking the Nation secretariat to further develop the proposal. The submission was not successful, and informal advice from the Networking the Nation Secretariat indicated that it was unlikely that the Networking the Nation Program would fund gender specific projects.

Earlier this year, the Minister for Communications and the Arts announced a new funding program called the AccessAbility Online Program, which was designed to improve access to online technologies for people with disabilities. WWDA wrote 2 funding submissions to this new Grants program in June. WWDA was notified in August that one of the submissions was successful. The submission, entitled "*Promoting Access to Online Information for Women With Disabilities in Australia*" requested \$63,754 to enable WWDA to 'promote access to online information for women with disabilities in Australia. The main strategies to achieve this will be:

- to develop an Australian women with disabilities website as a model of best practice in design and content, including the development of a national electronic based Women With Disabilities support group;
- to conduct an Internet Training Workshop for women with disabilities; (a representative of each State/Territory branch of WWDA will participate in the training, using a Train the Trainer model); and,
- to provide an Internet access point for each State and Territory branch of WWDA and electronically link these branches.

In June 98, WWDA organised a new e-mail account. The new e-mail address comes with additional space for a website, so when WWDA gets its website developed we won't have to pay additional costs to have it mounted on the web. The new WWDA email address is: wwda@wwda.org.au

Program Area: Housing

WWDA's main activities in the area of housing over the last 12 months have centred on the Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan projects. These projects aimed to assist women's refuges and similar services to promote accessibility for women with disabilities. The reports from the projects have been distributed to every SAAP funded women's refuge in Australia, and many other services, organisations and individuals have requested copies of the reports. The WWDA National Office has received many

calls from service providers who, after seeing WWDA's DDA project reports, have begun to develop Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans.

WWDA has also contributed to the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Evaluation, which commenced in August 98. SAAP is a Commonwealth/State shared program which provides funding for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. WWDA submitted a written submission at the early stages of the Evaluation to ensure that the issues facing women with disabilities were included in the Discussion Paper being developed by the Evaluation Team. This Discussion Paper has recently been released and public consultations are being held in each capital city to inform the Evaluation. WWDA will provide a more detailed submission to the second stage of the Evaluation.

Program Area: Links with the women's movement

WWDA has continued to establish and develop links with other women's organisations, at State/Territory; national, and international levels. As WWDA's profile grows, more and more women's organisations and services are linking in with WWDA.

In December 97, WWDA attended the National Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET) Conference in Sydney. Several women with disabilities were funded by the Office of Disability to attend this Conference, where the two WWDA DDA project reports were being launched by Pru Goward from the Office of the Status of Women. A paper presented at the Conference by a WWDA member appeared in the book of Conference proceedings. This Conference assisted WWDA to raise the awareness of women's organisations and workers in the violence sector to the issues facing women with disabilities.

In June 98, WWDA attended the Victorian Women's Health Conference in Melbourne. This Conference was attended by over 750 delegates. WWDA set up an Information Stall at this Conference and all the information on display disappeared within the first hour of the Conference. Two WWDA members (Margaret Cooper and Di Temby) presented a paper at the Conference on women with disabilities and ageing. Another paper was presented by a young woman with an intellectual disability on a Cervical Screening Project for women with disabilities. Several delegates at the Conference have since taken up WWDA membership. At the Conference, there was a keynote address by Lois Bryson, who spoke about the Women's Health Longitudinal Study. This major research project is being conducted over a 20 year period and 3 years have been completed. The study has qualitative and quantitative components and disability is included as an area in the survey. The study also undertakes sub-projects on particular areas. WWDA has since been able to secure an in principle agreement from the Office of Disability that the disability component of the research that has been conducted to date, will be analysed as a separate study.

In August 98, Vicki Toovey (WWDA Chairperson) attended the Women's Round Table Meeting in Canberra. This meeting was attended by representatives of National women's organisations who had been invited to attend by the Minister for the Status of Women, Judi Moylan. The Round Table Meeting is held each year and is designed to enable women's organisations to provide feedback to, and raise issues with the Government. Vicki gave a presentation at the Round Table Meeting on consultation models for women with disabilities. Several of the organisations attending this years Round Table meeting have since joined WWDA and have also requested copies of the paper Vicki gave in her presentation.

WWDA has established good links with the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) in Canada. We liaise with DAWN regularly by e-mail. WWDA recently wrote an article for the DAWN newsletter – it provided general information about WWDA as well as information on programs and current activities. DAWN and WWDA have worked collaboratively to develop an annotated bibliography of international

resources on women with disabilities and violence. This annotated bibliography has been included in the WWDA Women with Disabilities and Violence Information Kit which was developed earlier this year. WWDA has sent various reports and information to DAWN for their library and promotion. Recently, WWDA sent the Model Plan Process Reports to DAWN as well as a copy of the WWDA Women with Disabilities and Violence Information Kit.

In mid 97, the Office of the Status of Women funded an initiative called the Network Exchange of Women's Services (NEWS). The initiative was established by Office of the Status of Women to facilitate and promote the exchange information between women's organisations and groups in Australia. In January 98, WWDA wrote an article for inclusion into the Network Exchange of Women's Services Newsletter – the article provided information about WWDA and some of our major activity areas and achievements. Several organisations opted to join WWDA as a result of this article.

WWDA has also made extensive use of electronic mail facilities to liaise and network with other women's organisations. WWDA is a member of an electronic based Discussion Group for women's organisations. This group has been set up by the Pamela Denoon Trust and is administered by the National Women's Justice Coalition.

Over the past year, WWDA has extended its reach into the international arena and has now developed an international presence. There is still a lot of potential and opportunity to do more in this area, and WWDA's increasing use of information technologies such as the Internet and email will assist us in networking with more international women's groups. In mid 98 WWDA was fortunate to have a visit from the South African Commissioner on Gender Equality from Johannesburg, who was in Australia on a study tour. She had heard about WWDA and some of our activities and had made a specific request to visit the National WWDA office in Canberra. Several women with disabilities attended the meeting, and we were able to share information and learn about the similarities and differences facing women with disabilities in our respective countries. Since this visit, WWDA has had two other women's organisations from South Africa join our organisation – one of these being a specific women and disability organisation. In June 98, WWDA also had a visit from Professor Karen Grant, an academic from Canada who was in Australia to present a paper at the Victorian Women's Health Conference. Professor Grant was able to share information about the health reforms in Canada, and how this had impacted on women with disabilities.

Activity Area: Input into systemic change initiated by other bodies

As well as those activities already discussed in this report, WWDA has had input into several other government and non-government processes in order to effect positive change for women with disabilities.

Earlier this year, WWDA was invited by the Minister for Family Services to participate in the consultation process being undertaken on the development of the National Strategy for Ageing Australia. A submission was developed by Margaret Cooper on behalf of WWDA and submitted to the Minister for consideration.

WWDA has participated in a consultation process being conducted by the Department of Health and Family Services on improving access to employment assistance for people with a disability. A Focus Group of women with disabilities was held in April by the Australian Capital Territory WWDA Group to discuss the issues and develop a response to the Discussion Paper which was released by the Department of Health and Family Services.

In March 98, WWDA had input into a consultation process being conducted by the New South Wales Department of Ageing and Disability. The consultation was aiming to find out if gay, lesbian, and

transgender people with disabilities (as well as those living with HIV/AIDS) have experienced discrimination when accessing services funded by the Aged and Disability Department. A WWDA representative from NSW attended the meeting which was held at the Anti-Discrimination Board in Redfern in March.

In January 98, WWDA was invited to participate in the development of an Access and Equity Manual for women's refuges in New South Wales. Focus groups were conducted in May and WWDA was able to provide input to these focus groups.

In late 97, WWDA was invited to send two representatives to Women's Forum organised by Social Security. Margaret Cooper and Dallas Barwick attended the Social Security women's forum, which was held in Canberra. The forum gave some opportunity for the issues of women with disabilities to be raised.

In mid 98, WWDA was approached by the coordinator from a women's refuge in the Australian Capital Territory. The refuge wanted to develop a funding submission to conduct a project researching barriers to women with disabilities in the Australian Capital Territory who want to access refuges. The workers at the refuge were also keen to look at ways they could improve access to their service for women with disabilities. WWDA worked with the refuge coordinator to develop a submission for funding the project.

WWDA has continued to participate as a member of the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations. There are 10 peak disability organisations represented on the Caucus, which meets every 3 months. The Caucus provides advice to government and also provides consumer representatives for a range of government advisory bodies, committees, boards and so on. The Caucus provides an opportunity to share information, network, and take collective action on issues affecting people with disabilities.

WWDA has also continued to have some input to the development of Disability Discrimination Act Standards. Two WWDA members (Terry Fletcher and Joan Hume) represent the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations in the Disability Discrimination Act Standards Development Process through their role on Disability Discrimination Act Committees.

Activity Area: Organisational Development and Administrative Issues

During the last year, WWDA has worked hard to increase the public profile of the organisation; diversify the WWDA funding base; and develop organisational policies, procedures and systems. In May 98, WWDA was able to secure 12 month operational funding from the Office of Disability (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services). This was significant for WWDA, as prior to June 1998, WWDA had only been funded on a 6 monthly basis. An updated Strategic Plan for WWDA was developed mid year, and included ways WWDA could measure its performance to make sure it was responding appropriately to the needs of its members. WWDA was also able to secure an increase in operational funding from \$110,000 per year to \$112,000 per year.

Numerous funding submissions were developed during the 97-98 year, and some of these were successful, including the AccessAbility Online Project; the Global Fund for Women Project; and the Introductory Training Workshop Project. The funding submissions written by WWDA during 97-98 included:

- Submission to Office of the Status of Women's Non-Government Grants Program
- Submission to Office of Disability re WWDA operational funding
- Submission to Office of Disability re WWDA website development

- Submission to Office of Disability re WWDA Information Kit Development
- Submission to Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care Disability andamp; Violence Project
- Submission to Networking the Nation Program
- Submission to the AccessAbility Online Program (2 submissions)
- Submission to the Global Fund for Women
- Submission to Office of the Status of Women – Introductory Internet Project
- Submission to the National Disability Research Agenda Grants Program

During 97-98, WWDA also began researching and collating information on possible funding sources for the organisation, including the State WWDA groups. WWDA now has a large amount of information on Grants Programs, Trusts and Foundations, Scholarships and so on, and there are several available which are relevant to WWDA.

In January 98, WWDA moved into a new office space, which was badly needed. Due to the significant increase in public profile, coupled with much greater demand on the organisation, WWDA has had to develop systems and procedures to support the work of the organisation. Examples of this work include:

- re-organising and updating the filing system;
- collating, organising and cataloguing WWDA library materials and resources;
- developing a register for library loans;
- developing promotional materials for WWDA;
- developing computer-based filing systems and e-mail catalogues;
- re-organising office equipment;
- updating the WWDA mailing list.

WWDA has also begun to develop some operational policies (such as a Policy on Volunteers) to support the work of the organisation. There is still much work to be done in this area, and as WWDA evolves, it will become more important for these policies to be in place. WWDA has not done much in the past year on the development of organisational policies, and this is an area of need. For example, WWDA needs to have in place Position Statements and/or Policies on a range of issues that affect women with disabilities. It is hoped that the next year will see some of this work occur. In terms of staffing, the WWDA National Office currently has: Carolyn Frohmader (full time Executive Officer position) and Di McGowan (13 hours per week administrative officer). Eddie Wadwick, who has been at the WWDA office under the Jobstart Program (which ceased in August) helps out in the office 5 hours per week in areas of filing, photocopying etc.

Issues for Future Consideration

As can be seen from this report, WWDA has grown rapidly over the past 12-18 months. The work WWDA has done has increased its public profile significantly and this has seen an increase in memberships and a significant increase in demands on the organisation. WWDA is quite different from other peak disability consumer organisations, in the sense that it covers all disability types as opposed to focusing on one specific target group (eg: people with psychiatric disability; people with vision impairments; people with physical disabilities and so on). WWDA is also a national peak women's organisation. In practice, this means that requests for WWDA's input comes from 2 distinct sources – the women's issues arena; and the disability arena. The more WWDA becomes known within both these sectors, translates into an increase in workload and demand on the organisation. Over the past year, it has become apparent that there are several issues which WWDA will need to consider and address in the future and some of these are outlined here.

WWDA Funding

As outlined in this report, WWDA's operational funding comes from the Office of Disability within the Department of Health and Family Services. WWDA is funded at the same level (and in some cases much lower) than the other peak disability organisations, yet WWDA's mandate is significantly broader (eg: all disability types plus its role as a national women's organisation). WWDA's National Office staff are paid significantly less than their counterparts in other peak organisations (whether this be peak disability consumer organisations and/or national women's organisations). WWDA's current operational budget does not allow for the WWDA National Executive Committee members to paid sitting fees, or even reimbursements for their own costs associated with their National Executive Committee roles (such as telephone bills; faxes; emails; transport in their local areas to represent WWDA at local consultations and so on). Whilst some administrative expenses can be built into any project funding WWDA receives, this is not a viable or long term solution. WWDA is going to require a substantial increase in its base operational funding in the future and this is an area which may well require lobbying government on WWDA's part. Whilst it is acknowledged that many community based organisations face difficulties in the lack of adequate resources, WWDA's uniqueness in its role as a national disability and national women's organisation gives it a much stronger argument for requiring additional, and more equitable government funding.

WWDA Newsletter

The WWDA Newsletter has, unfortunately, been a bit neglected over the past year, and there are several reasons for this. With the lack of staffing in the National office, coupled with the increase in public profile and subsequent increased demands on WWDA, there simply hasn't been the resources available to produce the WWDA Newsletter on a regular basis. Other factors impinging on the Newsletter production, include the increased number of memberships (over 1400) and the increase in production costs. There is also the problem that due to the increased WWDA workload, it is difficult for the Executive Officer position to produce a 3 monthly Newsletter, which is a time consuming task, and is in effect, a project in its own right. There is also not enough money available within WWDA's operational budget to contract this work out to a Consultant. The WWDA Newsletter is an area which requires a re-evaluation and consideration of available options. One option that WWDA could consider is to produce perhaps a bi-monthly update sheet/newsletter, which is smaller, can be produced in-house, and is current. A WWDA Update could be more strategically targeted to its members and those on the WWDA mailing list in an effort to reduce postage costs. For example: previous WWDA Newsletters have been distributed to every member of Federal parliament, including backbenchers, senators and so on. It could be useful to revisit this, and decide which politicians WWDA should be targeting with its newsletter. The development of a WWDA website may also assist in reducing costs in this area – eg: WWDA updates could be regularly placed on a WWDA website so that only those people without Internet access would need to receive a hard copy. Again, these are only possible options and ideas which could be considered in the future.

WWDA Constitution

Given WWDA's rapid development in the past year, it seems timely for the organisation to review its Constitution. There are some areas in the Constitution which currently do not accurately reflect the operations of WWDA. An example to highlight this is in the area of membership classification. Currently, WWDA has three classes of membership – individual, associate and organisational. Organisational membership is open to organisations which are supportive of the aim and objectives of WWDA, and a majority of whose membership are women with a disability or have a proportionally large, active group of women with disabilities within it. The organisational membership fee is \$20. In practice, this has not worked well. WWDA does not currently have any organisational members, because most organisations are unable to demonstrate the requirements of organisational membership as set out in the WWDA Constitution. Most organisations opt to join WWDA as associate members. Associate membership costs \$5, as does individual membership. This means that organisations are able to join WWDA for a \$5 membership fee. One option to counter this could be to have 2 classes of

associate membership – one for individuals and one for organisations – but with different fees. Associate Individual membership fee could be \$5 and the Associate Organisational membership fee could be \$20.

Carolyn Frohmader
September 1998

WWDA Treasurer's Report – by Rae Hurrell

It is my pleasure to present the financial report of WWDA for the financial year 1997- 1998.

As you can see from the auditors report, we have been able to carry out our activities, while remaining within our budget: which is in itself, commendable. The income for this year is a total of \$181,718.41 of which 94.5% was made up of grant money. This percentage is slightly lower than for the same period last year. This means that we have been able to increase our non-grant income slightly, which is really good. However, when we look at our membership income the percentage drops markedly. This is something I would suggest we need to look into.

I would strongly recommend to the incoming committee that they take a realistic look at our membership fee structure, especially in the area of organisational associate membership.

Donations of \$4095.00 were received during the year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those responsible for this figure.

Our expenditure amounted to \$176,454.46. Staffing, as is to be expected, made up the largest component of this expenditure.

I feel that it would be remiss if, at this time, I did not acknowledge the volunteer hours of work by our members, and in particular, our Executive. I also thank our staff for their dedication and the work they perform, very often above and beyond the call of duty. Without this contribution, our staffing cost would have been much higher.

I would also recommend to the incoming committee that they undertake a review of the workload of our National office. At present we have an average incoming mail of 200 items per week; add to this the number of telephone calls; faxes and email items; and you can see that this is an extremely hard working office, with extremely dedicated staff. I feel that the incoming committee should look at the workload of our staff and take suitable means to assist them in this workload.

When you consider that we are not only a peak women's organisation, we are also a multidagnostic disability organisation, I feel that we should be making approaches to the government to reflect this in the amount of grant money which we receive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Carolyn Frohmader for her wonderful submission writing and Di McGowan for her work in book keeping. I have appreciated all your hard work and help.

L. Rae Hurrell September 1998

WWDA Tasmania Branch Report – by Sue Large

I believe that the Tasmanian Group though small in number we have achieved and are achieving a lot. Our two gatherings this year have been good social occasions as well as being informative.

In discussion we have identified that we should be a support group to our members, as well as providing information on the range of disabilities that we have knowledge of within the group to those who might need that information.

We also saw that there should be some social activities as well, for our next gathering it is hoped to have a luncheon meeting.

We aim to meet at least every two months, and a mailing list is being maintained to keep those interested informed.

This week we have put in a submission to the Health Promotion Council for funding to do a booklet on services within Tasmania for women with disabilities. We have also called this booklet as "*Doing It For Ourselves*" as a working title – because we liked the name also – it says it all.

At our last meeting we met Kimbra Priest a student, doing work experience, she is working disability issues at the Women's Health Centre they would like to see a publication of this nature available for use and they offered to assist us to this end.

Robin attended Optus' Consumer Liaison Forum Meeting 28-29 July and has their guidelines for community organisations seeking sponsorship/funding. Should WWDA consider applying for a telecommunications project from Optus?

If there is agreement Robin is happy to work with Carolyn and anyone else who may be interested. Also the guidelines could be circulated to all National Executive Committee members.

I was asked to nominate as the consumer representative for a steering committee on Work to Retirement, which will deal with the effects that retirement has on people with disabilities. My nomination was accepted and we had our first meeting in Melbourne on 24 July. A more extensive report on this steering committee will be given with the Annual General Meeting papers.

We now have representation in the North of the state with Merryn Thurley taking on that job for us.

We now also have our own letterhead and pamphlet, I must thank Dallas, from the Newcastle Group for giving the idea.

Women with Disabilities (Tas) have received a grant of \$2000 from the Cancer Screening and Control Service to provide some travel assistance this will be administered by (Tasmanian With Disabilities). For more information please contact myself or Grazina in Tasmanian With Disabilities Office.

On Saturday 29 August 1998 we held a Luncheon Meeting. Eight ladies attended and are now members of the Tasmanian Group. I was very pleased with this number of people coming to lunch we had a meeting agenda but it was a good opportunity for us all to have a good social occasion also, not all the ladies knew one another so the interaction was great, we are meeting again in October so that a report can be given to the National conference.

At this meeting Robin Wilkinson nominated Sue Large to be the State Representative for 1999, this was endorsed by all those present.

Sue Large
September 1998

WWDA Northern Territory Branch Report – by Joyce Deering

It has been another busy and interesting year for all in the disability industry in the Northern Territory. Territory Health Services launched the five year Strategic Plan for Disability Services in October 97, covering all services and programs. The signing of the new Commonwealth State Disability Agreement (CSDA) was delayed several times while our Health Minister, Dennis Burke, battled for more funding and finally was successful, with a new increase.

Recurrent funding of rental and some associated costs of an Office of Integrated DisAbility Action by Territory Health Services in April, has enabled a contact point in a very accessible community setting to be set up. This operates with voluntary staff and will hopefully keep pace with the need for information by consumers and organisations, as well as organising several meetings on National issues.

Both Territory and Federal Governments have a high priority on Transport issues and have held meetings with good consumer input. There is an ever increasing unmet need for Respite Care, in all its facets and continues on most agendas.

On a happier note, another of our women members received the Rotary Shine On Award in a ceremony at Parliament House. On International Women's Day, I was one of twenty seven Territory women who received the Chief Minister's Achievement award, mine being for work in the disability area, and in women's issues.

The Festival of Darwin concludes with a Parade on 5th September. For the first time, a large group of people with disabilities, carers and advocates are getting out and showing their abilities. Thanks, Dallas, for leading the way with your members last year on International Women's Day.

I am proud to acknowledge my part in Women With Disabilities Australia, the Northern Territory Hansard records this when the Chief Minister read the achievements of all recipients of the Award. The challenge ahead will strengthen the place WWDA shares in the future.

Joyce Deering
September 1998

WWDA New South Wales Branch Report – by Joan Hume

The first activity that NSW WWDA was involved in was the Go Girl Women's Festival in the Domain in March. WWDA NSW had an information stall during the day which was staffed by a loyal band of supporters who had responded to a letter I had written to Sydney members that were on our mailing list. During the day our stall was visited by hundreds of women who attended the Festival, many of whom inquired about the work of the national organisation. Written information, in the form of pamphlets, papers and booklets were distributed. WWDA NSW is now a member of the Go Girl Festival and hopefully will participate in next years event.

Attempts to resuscitate an active committee to plan and coordinate the NSW WWDA forum have proven unsuccessful without a sound funding base. I have approached several young women about reforming a core group with the major focus being the holding of a Leadership Seminar similar to the one held in conjunction with the 1997 Annual General Meeting in Adelaide. It is anticipated that the

planning group will be formed before the end of the year. WWDA has provided me with a list of national Philanthropic organisations which fund disability related activities as well as a draft budget for holding the seminar. Several of these organisations are currently being approached by letter with a view to funding the leadership seminar.

On behalf of WWDA I participated in a forum on women and disability in higher education in the Winds of Change International Conference held in July at the University of Technology, Sydney. During the forum I delivered a paper on the recent developments in educational support services for students with disabilities in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and the University systems. Helen Meekosha, another WWDA member, also delivered a paper at this Forum.

Early in August, I represented WWDA at the launch of the National Women's Leadership Project sponsored by the Australian Council of Business Women in Sydney. They are seeking nominations by suitably qualified women to participate on boards and be involved in a networking and training project. They require Curriculum Vitae to be returned by 4th September, so there is not much time if other WWDA members wish to participate.

Joan Hume
September 1998

WWDA Queensland Branch Report – by Rae Hurrell

“Life is great in the Sunshine State” so says the words of the song. Not so for women with disabilities working to form a State branch of WWDA.

This last year has seen many personal problems for the women who have been working to try to establish WWDA in Queensland. Three have suffered the problems with the death of a parent, while others have lost a relative. Health has also been a major problem. Respiratory problems have been high on the list of difficulties, with Queensland suffering an unusually high incidence of lung problems this year.

All in all, it hasn't been the year we had all hoped and planned for. However, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.....we think! Karin Swift has agreed to work on the setting up of the State group and has already approached a number of women with disabilities in Brisbane. Karin comes to us with a background in disability rights and the time and dedication to work on this project.

We look forward to soon having a State branch in the Sunshine State.

L. Rae Hurrell
September 1998

WWDA South Australia Branch Report – by Chandra Sluggett

Violence Against Women With Disabilities Project

Distributed the two booklets to:

- Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service (MWESS)
- Disability Information Resource Centre (DIRC)
- Working Women's Centre Inc
- Women's Legal Services South Australia

Remaining books will be distributed within South Australia.

WWDA South Australia was invited to attend a staff meeting by Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service (MWESS) at which they asked for help with assessing the accessibility of the new homes for women with disabilities. This will be taken up as soon as the South Australia Housing Trust (SAHT) makes the homes available. I also informed them that, most if not all, local councils now pay for a local Occupational Therapist to do such an assessment.

Women With Disabilities Library Collection

The Disability Information Resource Centre has agreed to co-work with WWDA South Australia Development Group with starting a collection on women with disabilities. WWDA South Australia have been informed for their help and support. A number of items, such as books, reports, newspaper clippings, journal articles etc, have been donated and will be lent to the Disability Information Resource Centre on a permanent basis. This would enable interested parties to access material which would otherwise be sitting in a home bookshelf with limited access.

WWDA South Australia Development Group Representation

WWDA South Australia is a member of, and represented by Chandra Sluggett, on:

- Working Women's Centre Inc Management Committee
- WorkCover Corporations Disability Focus Group

WWDA South Australia Current Tasks

University of South Australia Student Union is co-working with WWDA South Australia to:

- lobby to universities to create better access to students with disabilities and their carers; and
- the Union to take a pro-active role to create better access to student amenities eg: libraries for students with disabilities and their carers.

Negotiated with the National Australia Bank to allow students with disabilities who study part time to hold a Tertiary student account without being penalised. Currently, one has to be a full time student to get away from fees, charges and other conditions. They are not prepared to advertise this, but have given a phone number for anyone else to call on. We should put it in the next newsletter.

Negotiated with a couple of businesses to donate free printing eg: newsletters, stickers, stationary for promotional activities etc. We have not actioned on this just yet.

Currently applying for funds from other sources and accepting donations.

Opened a bank account with CPS, fee free except tax. Need the tax exemption code. Do we have it?

Chandra Sluggett

September 1998

WWDA Australian Capital Territory Branch Report – by Di Palmer

I wrote this report a couple of months ago and then had to alter it due to changes in the state of development in different areas. I do hope it will agree in case and context. I am not expert in checking.

The ACT Group has experienced a considerable increase in public awareness during the past 12 months. Since our establishment we have been inconspicuous in the shadow of the National Office. We changed our entry in the ACT Contact Book – a publication listing all organisations working in the Australian Capital Territory. This book does not discriminate between local and national organisations and therefore people seeking information had no idea as to the exact identity of each group. I must emphasise that this was not in any way the fault of the National Office but was entirely due to the inaccurate provision of information to the public. In addition, WWDA ACT is now listed in the Canberra Telephone book giving us a public image and contactability.

Our recognition has not greatly increased the number of people attending our monthly meetings, unfortunately. I appreciate that many people are unable to attend and our public transport system – buses – did not help that situation until the timetable changes this month. The date for change has been moved twice and I am not sure the date mentioned will be the final one. The change, together with a raft of other initiatives will greatly increase the mobility choices of people who rely on public transport. There are still only a small percentage of accessible buses in the entire ACT bus fleet. However, we have a guarantee that all buses purchased in the future will be accessible. In addition to the more suitable buses we will have a weekday timetable seven days a week. At present the buses are so infrequent that they are scarcely utilised.

The grant we received last year from the ACT Health Pact (Health Program ACT) is being spent on a range of workshops on topics to empower our members. These include matters such as: assertiveness, group dynamics, stress, public speaking and many more. We have been able to spend the money in one financial year and Health Pact (the funding body) has extended the time to utilise the grant for another twelve months.

Another worthwhile initiative in Canberra has been the development of an accessible information program by one of the government agencies. I only heard of it by word of mouth but on further enquiry found that it was only meant for younger people.

I should explain the unusual government arrangements in the ACT. When I came here we were governed by the Federal government. Initially, we did not have a vote, unlike all other Australian citizens. Then contrary to the choice of 95% of the citizens in three referenda, we were given self-government. Most of our grants have been provided by local government money.

We have received a grant of \$3,500 from the Women's Centre for Health Matters. The money was raised by Zonta. An important development resulting from the administration of this grant has been the Centre for Women's Health Matters have offered to auspice WWDA ACT if we receive further grants.

With the current Zonta money we are running a focus group, six individual interviews and a general workshop on fatigue and stress management. We are at the preliminary stage of setting up the program and have selected a woman to conduct the program and prepare a report. The facilitator and manager of the program is Josephine De Flumeri who has run a number of courses for groups of women from a non-English speaking background.

We are working with the women's refugees to make one of their buildings physically accessible. There are already women with psychiatric disabilities resident in one of the buildings.

A further project is a research project being carried out by one of the refugees to organise resource material on the integration of women with disabilities into refuges. This will include access for support people and training courses for refuge staff. When we first visited the staff, we noted that much of the money for staff training budget was spent on understanding all kinds of lifestyle changes for women in refuges but did not refer to including women with disabilities. As Carolyn said, it seems they can only be content if they continue to hurl guilt money at disability. Could we become politically significant as a minority group.

I have spoken with the Community Liaison Officer from the ACT Chief Ministers Department. We have been missing out on both Federal and Territory announcements of community consultation and not having any input into planning projects or any other matters. We have agreed to ask one radio station to feature all Government public announcements on a particular day of the week. All we have to do is ensure that one of us hears the program.

We look forward with interest to moving on with our current programs in the coming year. Hopefully, we will expand our areas of operation.

Di Palmer
September 1998

WWDA Western Australia Branch Report – by Maria McGrath

I attended several domestic violence seminars, one in Melbourne organised by the Office of the Status of Women, and two in Perth, organised by the Older Person's Rights Movement and Julie Morland, Western Australian Minister for Health. As a result of these seminars, it has become clear that there is a problem with domestic violence, mostly hidden, which is affecting disabled women and their children.

I investigated the availability of refuge hostels as an escape for disabled women suffering from domestic violence. Most did not have wheelchair facilities, however I did locate one hostel in Midland which did.

The National Council of Women held a forum on the sterilisation of disabled women (mostly with intellectual disabilities). It seems that this has been a serious issue. Young women are often sterilised against their will at the duress of parents and others. Further, the sterilisation methods used, often go far beyond what is considered necessary for contraception. These women are often subjected to removal of all reproductive organs, including the ovaries. This radical surgery causes early menopause with its obvious associated problems.

At the moment, at the request of a social worker from Princess Margaret Children's Hospital, I am trying to locate suitable accommodation for a sixteen year old girl who is head injured, a quadriplegic, and suffering from extreme anti-social behavioural problems. Presently, the Paraquad Centre is assessing their criteria to determine if they can accept her, however, it is extremely difficult to find accommodation facilities that cater for her high level of care. If Paraquad Centre cannot accept her, she may have to be accommodated in an aged care nursing home where they have the facilities to care for her. I feel this is an unsuitable arrangement however, I feel there is little else I can do if no other facilities are available.

I have been working with Diane Cook from ACROD helping to promote the new laws in relation to disabled parking bays. Fines have been substantially increased for people illegally parking in disabled parking bays. Diane and I have been working with the media to educate the public on the importance of

not parking in disabled parking bays. This was an Australia wide campaign to create awareness of the needs of the disabled.

The Craft Day we have been running every two weeks is still running however, the funding we received to finance this activity is finished. We will continue to meet while we apply for more funding.

A lot of issues have been brought to my attention which, as yet, I have not been able to investigate. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of sickness amongst the Committee this year and we have found it necessary to curtail some of our activity. We hope to resume full activity shortly.

Maria McGrath
September 1998

WWDA Newcastle Branch Report – by Dallas Barwick

WWDA Newcastle was established in May 1996. Since that time, the group has grown substantially. It meets once a month and between 35-60 women with disabilities attend the meetings. Some of the group members come from the outer areas of Newcastle, such as Maitland and other country areas. Women with disabilities who live in group homes in the Hunter also participate in the group meetings.

The Newcastle group has been busy during the last year working on an oral history project. To date, three women with cerebral palsy and two women with intellectual disability have given their stories as women with disabilities. These stories have been recorded by both video camera and in written form. WWDA Newcastle has developed a submission for funding to the New South Wales Department for Women to produce a book and video of these and other women with disabilities stories and experiences. In March 1998, WWDA Newcastle participated in the International Women's Day activities, including the parade. This year, WWDA Newcastle led the parade and also had a speaker representing WWDA Newcastle at the parade. WWDA Newcastle will also be participating for the first time in the Reclaim the Night march, which will be held in October. The WWDA Newcastle group has also undertaken activities in the area of violence against women, and has participated in consultations with policy makers around the issue of violence against women with disabilities.

In May, WWDA Newcastle celebrated its second birthday, with a disco – over 70 people attended the function, including women with disabilities, friends, families and service providers.

WWDA Newcastle produces a newsletter every 3 months which includes contributions from the group members. The Newsletter is produced by Vicki Haslem, who uses a head pointer to put together all aspects of the Newsletter, including text entry, layout and design.

The WWDA Newcastle group has become a very important group in the Hunter region and now receives referrals from a wide range of sources, including service providers in the area.

WWDA Newcastle looks forward to increasing its profile and activities in the next year.

Dallas Barwick
September 1998

WWDA Victoria Branch Report – by Keran Howe

The Victorian Women With Disabilities Network (VWDN) has had a busy and successful year despite a sense of more work and not enough resources which seems to pervade small community-based organisations in the era of economic rationalism. The network has concentrated its efforts in a number of key areas and collective members have shared responsibility to network and co-ordinate specific task groups to ensure our efforts are most effectively placed. A small co-ordinating collective meets monthly and receives reports back from a representative of the different task groups. Our rural Collective member, Pam Menere contributes to the work of VWDN by maintaining our financial records.

The Newsletter

VWDN has over 250 members and has circulated 4 newsletters this year to keep members in touch with what is happening around Victoria and nationally for women with disabilities. A small grant of \$700 was received from the Department of Human Services for distribution of the Newsletter. Given its meagre resources the network has, the newsletter is brief and feature two or three significant issues or events in each edition.

Women With Disabilities and Violence

Lindy Corbett and Keran Howe have represented VWDN on the Woorarra Working Group, a committee representing women with disabilities and the domestic violence services sector which attempts to oversee the implementation of the Woorarra Women's Refuge Disability Action Plan. As part of this implementation, the working group has taken responsibility for raising awareness of violence against women with disabilities within the domestic violence sector and to government. This included:

- attending the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET) Conference in Sydney in December 1997;
- attending WWDA's National Conference on women with disabilities and violence;
- representing women with disabilities at the Victorian InterDepartmental Committee Consultation on Violence and the Victorian Taskforce on Violence Against Women;
- holding ongoing meetings with the Victorian Department of Human Services re the findings of the report and the government's response to these findings;
- a submission to the State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Evaluation regarding the needs of women with disabilities.

The Book Club

Janny Hall, Di Temby, Lesley Hall, Glen Tomasetti and Margaret Cooper have worked together to develop a proposal for a series of books of women's experiences of disabilities. As part of this, a series of workshops on writing are being held with Glen Tomasetti as facilitator. The workshops proved to be enormously popular and indicate a real interest by women with disabilities in developing the writing skills they require to tell their own story.

Submission to the People Together Social Justice Audit

People Together is a community based organisation concerned with monitoring changes in human services in Victoria. In May, People Together conducted a hearing into the impact of changes to services for women and Glen Tomasetti and Margaret Cooper presented a submission on the current situation of women with disabilities.

Victorian Women's Health Conference

Di Temby and Margaret Cooper presented a paper on women with disabilities and ageing at the Victorian Women's Health Conference, which was attended by over 700 women. This paper was very

well received. Other papers concerning women with disabilities focused on accessing Pap Smears and women with intellectual disability and sexual assault.

Access to Public Space

VWDN periodically comments on access issues for women's services and organisations. This year Jan Testro co-ordinated a series of meetings with the Queen Victoria Women's Centre to improve access for women with disabilities. These meetings resulted in significant changes to the building although the heritage nature of the building and cost of renovation have meant not all recommendations have been addressed.

Transport Forum

This month Jan Testro organised a forum for women on 'Public Transport, Women and Safety'. Jeanette Lee from DARE spoke on the direct action campaign DARE has held to raise awareness of the continuing problems of public transport for people with disabilities. These problems have been exacerbated in Victoria by the introduction of machines for ticket purchasing and the removal of conductors from trams and trains.

Information for Women With Disabilities

Two resources, *More And Less* – a report on the well-being experiences of Victorian women with physical disabilities and the nature and range of health and community services they want to use, and *Doing it for Ourselves* – a health guide for Victorian women with disabilities were developed by VWDN in 1996 with funding from Vic Health. Distribution of these resources continues.

Keran Howe
September 1998

Minutes of the WWDA Annual General Meeting

The WWDA Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday September 12 1998, at the Hotel Y, 489 Elizabeth Street Melbourne.

Present:

Vicki Toovey, Joyce Deering, Margaret Cooper, Lindy Corbett, Gillian van der Drift, Margaret Tomkin, Daisy Serong, Christine Pitt, Diana Palmer, Patricia Woodcroft-Lee, Sue Large, Anne Storr, Karin Swift, Rae Hurrell, Joan Hume, Patricia Nichol, Maria McGrath, Taania Huddleston, Natalie Tomas, Chandra Sluggett, Keran Howe, Dianne McGowan, Karen Hanson, Nell Bliss, Pat Grigg, Liz Hogan, Janny Ryan, Frank Hall-Bentick, Jan Testro, Carolyn Frohmader.

Apologies:

People With Disabilities New South Wales, Mr Kim Beazley (Federal Opposition Leader), Mrs Sullivan (Federal Member for Moncreiff), Mr Peter Costello (Federal Treasurer), Mr Phillip Ruddock, Ms Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis (Ethnic Child Care, Family andamp; Child Services NSW), Senator Tambling, Commissioner Lawrie (Northern Territory), Donna Justo, Senator Natasha Stot-Despoja, Ms Jackie Kelly (Member for Lindsay NSW), Barbara Hirst, Mr Roger Price (Federal Member for Chifley), Mr Andrew Thompson (Minister for Sport), Mr Warwick Smith (Minister for Family Services), Mr John Forrest (Federal Member for Mallee), Mr Peter Slipper (Federal Member for Fisher), Mr Mark Vaile (Minister for Transport andamp; Regional Development), Chris Gallus (Member for Hindmarsh), Donna Vale (Federal Member for Hughes), Senator Ellison, Dr Andrew Southcott, Office of Women's Policy Queensland, Senator Dee Margetts, Ms Jenny Macklin (Federal Member for Jagajaga), Ms Joyce Weeks, Senator Sue West, Mr John Howard (Prime Minister), Senator Boswell (Queensland), Mr Allan

Griffin (Federal Member for Bruce), Senator Chris Schacht (South Australia), Ms Dallas Barwick (WWDA Newcastle), Ms Madge Sceriha (WWDA Queensland), Ms Terry Fletcher (WWDA New South Wales), Ms Robin Wilkinson (WWDA Tasmania), Rebecca Maxwell.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome

Vicki Toovey (WWDA Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Each person attending the meeting introduced themselves. Vicki gave an overview of the Agenda and also dealt with housekeeping issues. The Annual General Meeting Papers were made available to all those present at the meeting. The papers were also provided in alternative formats, including on cassette tape, on disc, and in large print format.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies

Carolyn Frohmader formally noted the apologies. As there were a large number of apologies, they were not all read out. However it was agreed that the list of apologies would be made available during the day to anyone who wanted to access the list. It was also noted that the apologies would be formally documented in the minutes.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Previous WWDA Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the previous WWDA Annual General Meeting (1997) were tabled by Vicki Toovey and were passed unanimously as a true and accurate reflection of the 1997 Annual General Meeting.

- Moved: Di Palmer
- **Seconded: Joan Hume**

Agenda Item 4: WWDA Reports 1997-98

The following reports were tabled:

- Chairperson's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Executive Officer's Report
- State/Territory WWDA Reports
- WWDA Representatives Report

These reports were provided to all those attending the meeting and were also made available in alternative formats.

Chairperson's Report

The Chairperson's Report was tabled and spoken to by Vicki Toovey, WWDA Chairperson 1997-98.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was tabled and spoken to by Rae Hurrell, WWDA Treasurer 1997-98.

Following the Treasurer's Report, a formal vote of thanks was given to Carolyn Frohmader, WWDA Executive Officer (Acting) for her work for the organisation.

- Moved: Joan Hume
- **Seconded: Rae Hurrell**

WWDA Australian Capital Territory Report

The WWDA Australian Capital Territory Report was tabled and spoken to by Di Palmer, Convenor of the WWDA Australian Capital Territory Report Group for 1997-98.

WWDA Tasmania Report

The WWDA Tasmania Report was tabled and spoken to by Sue Large, Co-Convenor of the WWDA Tasmania Group for 1997-98.

WWDA Queensland Report

The WWDA Queensland Report was tabled and spoken to by Rae Hurrell, WWDA Queensland representative for 1997-98.

WWDA New South Wales Report

The WWDA New South Wales Report was tabled and spoken to by Joan Hume, WWDA New South Wales representative for 1997-98.

WWDA Western Australia Report

The WWDA Western Australia Report was tabled and spoken to by Maria McGrath, Convenor of the WWDA Western Australia Group for 1997-98.

WWDA South Australia Report

The WWDA South Australia Report was tabled and spoken to by Chandra Sluggett, Convenor of the WWDA South Australian Development Group 1997-98.

WWDA Victoria Report

The Victorian Women With Disabilities Network Report was tabled and spoken to by Keran Howe, the Victorian representative on the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1997-98.

WWDA Newcastle Report

The WWDA Newcastle Report was tabled and spoken to by Carolyn Frohmader (WWDA Executive Officer) on behalf of Dallas Barwick, Convenor of the WWDA Newcastle Group for 1997-98.

WWDA Northern Territory Report

The WWDA Northern Territory Report was tabled and spoken to by Joyce Deering, WWDA Northern Territory representative for 1997-98.

Vicki thanked the WWDA State representatives for their reports.

Agenda Item 5: Confirmation of State Delegates to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99

The nominations for State delegates to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99 were presented to the Annual General Meeting by Joyce Deering, WWDA Co-Vice President.

Queensland:

Karin Swift was nominated as the Queensland representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

New South Wales:

Dallas Barwick was nominated as the New South Wales representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

Tasmania:

Sue Large was nominated as the Tasmanian representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

South Australia:

Chandra Sluggett was nominated as the South Australian representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously. Vicki Toovey was also nominated to the National Executive Committee for 1998-99. It was agreed that under 16.1.C of the WWDA Constitution, Vicki Toovey (also from South Australia) could be nominated for the National

Executive Committee. It was recognised that it is unrealistic for the WWDA Chairperson to have to take on responsibility as Convenor of the State group, as well as WWDA Chairperson. This will be addressed in the review of the WWDA Constitution which will occur in the 1998-99 year. It was agreed that for the purposes of this Annual General Meeting, we use Section 16.1.C of the WWDA Constitution to enable 2 delegates from South Australia to be nominated to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99.

- Moved: Rae Hurrell
- Seconded: Maria McGrath

Australian Capital Territory:

Di Palmer was nominated as the Australian Capital Territory representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

Western Australia:

Maria McGrath was nominated as the Western Australian representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

Victoria:

Keran Howe was nominated as the Victorian representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

Northern Territory:

Joyce Deering was nominated as the Northern Territory representative to the WWDA National Executive Committee for 1998-99. This nomination was accepted unanimously.

Agenda Item 6: Proposal for WWDA to apply to become a full member of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)

Vicki Toovey tabled the letter from the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) which invited WWDA to apply for full membership of ACOSS. Vicki invited those attending the Annual General Meeting to participate in discussion about whether WWDA should join ACOSS. Vicki talked about the rationale for WWDA joining ACOSS, with some of these reasons including:

- ACOSS is better resourced than WWDA to take on particular issues;
- ACOSS is a similar organisation to WWDA in that it is concerned with issues of social justice and equity.

Carolyn gave an example to those attending the Annual General Meeting of where WWDA being a member of ACOSS could have been useful, and this was in the area of the announcement of a Goods and services Tax (GST) for Australia should the Liberal party win the upcoming Federal election. When the Goods and Services Tax was announced, the WWDA office received an influx of calls from concerned WWDA members who wanted to know what impact a Goods and Services Tax would have on them. As WWDA is currently not resourced to deal with an issue of this magnitude, the concerns of WWDA members were fed back to ACOSS, who appeared to have a lot of power and influence in the Goods and Services Tax and Tax Reform debate. Carolyn approached ACOSS to find out how the concerns of women with disabilities could be factored into their response to the Goods and Services Tax and Tax Reform issue. It was at this stage where discussions began around WWDA becoming full members of ACOSS.

Margaret Cooper suggested that if WWDA did become members of ACOSS, we would want agreement from ACOSS that we be consulted on all issues, not just traditional 'disability' issues. It was agreed that if we joined ACOSS, we would seek clarification from ACOSS about their mechanisms for

consultation. Anne Storr spoke about the fact that there are State and Territory branches of ACOSS, and the WWDA State/Territory groups may wish to join ACOSS at their local level.

Vicki Toovey put forward a proposal that WWDA take up full membership of ACOSS, with an understanding that we review the success or otherwise of this at next year's WWDA Annual General Meeting.

- Moved: Anne Storr
- Seconded: Lindy Corbett.

Agenda Item 7: Proposal to Review of WWDA Constitution

Vicki Toovey spoke about the need for the WWDA Constitution to be reviewed over the next year. Vicki gave some examples of where the WWDA Constitution needed to be reviewed and changed in order to better reflect the activities and directions of WWDA. Some of the areas Vicki highlighted included: the classes of membership; and state group development issues.

It was proposed that all WWDA members be given an opportunity to read the WWDA Constitution and be asked to put in submissions. It was also proposed that a Working Group be established to review the WWDA Constitution.

- Moved: Rae Hurrell
- Seconded: Karin Swift

Joyce Deering suggested that a timeline be agreed upon for this work. It was agreed that any submissions on the review of the WWDA Constitution be received by no later than March 31st 1999.

Agenda Item 8: Other Business

8.1: Australian Physiotherapy Association Advertising Campaign

Sue Large alerted those attending the Annual General Meeting to the current advertising campaign of the Australian Physiotherapy Association which appears to denigrate people with disabilities (eg: the campaign uses images of a 'hunchback' to promote the need for back care etc). Sue had a copy of the brochure from the campaign and also said that there was a television advertisement using similar images. Carolyn will copy the brochure and send to each State and Territory group for them to follow it up if they choose. Carolyn will also write a letter of complaint to the Australian Physiotherapy Association on behalf of WWDA.

This concluded the formal business of the WWDA Annual General Meeting for 1998. An Introduction to the Internet Workshop for Women with Disabilities followed the Annual General Meeting.

WWDA National Executive Committee Members 1998-1999

South Australia
Vicki Toovey (Chair)
Chandra Sluggett

Western Australia
Maria McGrath

Northern Territory
Joyce Deering (Vice Chair/Treasurer)

Queensland
Karin Swift (Vice Chair)

New South Wales
Dallas Barwick

Australian Capital Territory
Di Palmer

Victoria
Keran Howe

Tasmania
Sue Large (Secretary)