

# WWDA Annual Report 1999-2000

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## 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. 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 information on WWDA's activities during the period September 1999 – September 2000. Reports are provided by WWDA's Chairperson Keran Howe; WWDA's Executive Director Carolyn Frohmader, and WWDA Treasurer Joyce Deering. WWDA State and Territory branch reports are included in this Annual Report, along with reports from WWDA representatives on various Advisory Committees, Working Parties etc. WWDA's Audited Report for the 1999-2000 financial year is included in this Annual Report.

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## WWDA Chairperson's Report – By Keran Howe

Fulfilling the role of Chairperson for WWDA in 1999-2000 has been a challenging and rewarding one. The breadth of work carried out on behalf of women with disabilities is testimony to the competency, vision and passion of the staff and members of WWDA. It is also testimony to the extreme unmet needs of women with disabilities in Australia with social and economic indicators continuing to demonstrate

women with disabilities are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Australia. The extent of this need places enormous pressure on WWDA to respond within the context of our limited resources. The Committee and staff of WWDA recognise WWDA's critical role in seeking to highlight and identify ways for government, industry and the community in general to respond to this need.

## Our celebrations

One of the highlights of this year has been the national recognition given to WWDA for its work in addressing violence against women with disabilities through the Australian Violence Prevention Award. This award is sponsored by the Heads of Australian Governments as a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory initiative and recognised the work undertaken by WWDA to identify and find ways to address the particular issues of violence experienced by women with disabilities.

Another WWDA celebration took place in June with the 'Celebrating our Abilities' Dinner co-hosted by WWDA and the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network, the Victorian branch of WWDA. 150 women from a diverse range of organisations joined in a night of dance, singing, networking and fun that show-cased the myriad talents of women with disabilities.

## Our Work

A significant number of projects have been undertaken this year with funding from a diverse range of government departments. This work has been predominantly in the areas of leadership and mentoring, information technology, violence and sterilisation of women with disabilities.

The number of advisory committees and boards on which WWDA is represented continues to grow, providing opportunities to advocate on behalf of women with disabilities in relation to specific issues at state and national levels.

With a number of significant reviews taking place at national level, WWDA has been active in providing input to government reviews to ensure that the particular needs of women with disabilities are taken into consideration. These include the Supported Accommodation Assistance Scheme Review and the Welfare Reform Review.

At an international level WWDA has liaised with women's organisations and had input on the critical human rights issues for women with disabilities as both women and as people with disabilities. WWDA continues to receive requests from both developing and developed nations around the world for information arising from research that we have undertaken.

## Membership Structure

This year's funding agreement with the Office of Disability carried an additional outcome indicator regarding raising funds from other sources. In response to this requirement, the committee amended the fee structure and introduced a fee structure based on membership classification. The three classifications are full membership, associate membership and organisation membership. This decision has been well supported by the broader membership. In recognition of the economic disadvantage experienced by many of our members, where members are unable to meet the cost of membership this fee has been waived.

## Staffing

Undoubtedly the great success of WWDA would not be possible without the inspirational work of our National Executive Officer, Carolyn Frohmader. Carolyn has worked with passion to ensure that

WWDA is responsive to the priorities identified by our members. Caroline brings a professionalism and generosity of spirit that is greatly appreciated by the National Executive Committee.

Helen Mattick has provided the administrative support for WWDA and has also been unstinting in her generosity to WWDA. Helen resigned at the end of this year and we are grateful to her for the time, efficiency and effort she has given to WWDA.

## National Executive Committee

Members of the National Executive Committee represent each state and territory as well as one representative of rural women. The members of the 1999-2000 executive committee are:

Keran Howe (Chairperson)

Karin Swift (Qld) and Joyce Deering (NT) October-April(Deputy Chairs)

Helen Meekosha (NSW) May-October (Deputy Chair)

Joyce Deering (NT) (Treasurer)

Sue Large (Tasmania)(Secretary)

Di Palmer (ACT)

Christina Ryan (ACT)

Chandra Suggett (South Australia)

Maria McGrath (Western Australia)

Pamela Menere (Vic) (Rural Representative)

The NEC this year has organised specific portfolio responsibilities that has enabled members to focus on the areas that are of greatest interest to them. Committee members co-opted other interested members to assist in portfolio areas. The Portfolios areas are as follows:

**Violence:** Karin Swift, Keran Howe

**Telecommunications:** Sue Salthouse (co-opted), Margaret Cooper (co-opted), Vanessa Cini (co-opted), Joyce Deering

**Education and Employment:** Sue Large, Pamela Menere, Chandra Sluggett

**Leadership and Mentoring:** Helen Meekosha, Anne Storr (co-opted), Margaret Cooper (co-opted)

**Health and Ageing:** Keran Howe, Di Temby (co-opted), Margaret Cooper (co-opted)

**Links to the Women's Movement:** Christina Ryan, Di Palmer, Karin Swift

**Welfare Reform:** Helen Meekosha, Christina Ryan, Keran Howe

**Membership/Constitution:** Di Palmer, Joyce Deering, Christina Ryan

**Human Rights:** Helen Meekosha

Thank you to all of the National Executive Committee and WWDA members who have contributed significantly to the work of WWDA in a voluntary capacity. Thanks also to all of the organisations and individuals who have recognised and supported WWDA throughout the year. Your support has been fundamental to our growth. Our thanks also to the many hours of voluntary effort by contributed by the family and friends of WWDA staff and members. Without this enormous voluntary effort WWDA could not achieve the success that it continues to achieve.

## Future Directions

The need to strengthen the network of groups of women with disabilities through state branches is a continuing challenge that is hampered by the extremely limited funding available in most states. The Leadership and Mentoring Program has opened up new opportunities for participants to play a role in the development of state networks and in the coming year we hope to see a consolidation of this area of our work. In keeping with the changing nature of state relations to the national organisation a review of the constitution will be conducted in the coming year.

The further development of work in identifying issues for women with disabilities who have experienced sterilisation will also be a priority for WWDA in the coming year as a vital human rights issue for women with disabilities.

The continuing growth in WWDA's profile and with that the demands on the organisation are not reflected in our resources. This creates enormous pressure for our limited staff and requires significant voluntary effort from the Committee and active members. In the coming year a significant priority will be planning to ensure a more realistic resource base to respond to the organisation's demands.

As the year came to a close in June 2000 WWDA received notice that funding would be provided for six months only pending a review of the National Secretariat Program. This brings with it difficulty in planning for the long-term and some uncertainty about WWDA's future. The staff, committee and broader membership of WWDA continue to work and plan for the needs of women with disabilities and to ensure WWDA's need for adequate organisational resourcing is addressed. Whilst we are confident that our achievements and outcomes to date will provide a foundation for a guaranteed future, we need to ensure also, that our resources are commensurate with the expectations that women with disabilities and the community as a whole have of WWDA as an organisation.

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## WWDA Executive Director's Report – By Carolyn Frohmader

It is outside the scope of this Annual Report to detail all the achievements and outcomes of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) during the period September 1999 – September 2000. This section of the Annual Report provides information on some of WWDA's major achievements and outcomes over the past year, and demonstrates the diversity and breadth of WWDA's role across a range of sectors. The information provided here is structured into WWDA's major policy and program areas.

### Violence Against Women With Disabilities

In October 1999, WWDA's research, systemic advocacy, publications, and projects on violence against women with disabilities were recognised at the highest level, with WWDA being awarded the Australian Violence Prevention Award by the Australian Heads of Government. The Australian Violence Prevention Awards are sponsored by the Heads of Australian Governments as a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory initiative and are designed to reward the most outstanding projects for the prevention or reduction of violence in Australia. The Australian Violence Prevention Award was presented Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) at a reception at Parliament House. Senator Amanda Vanstone presented WWDA with a Certificate of Merit and a cheque for \$10,000. WWDA was also awarded the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Violence Prevention Award in 1999. In early 2000, WWDA was invited by the United Nations to apply for the United Nations Millennium Peace Prize for Women 2000, in recognition of its achievements in addressing the issue of violence against women with disabilities. The Award is judged in March 2001.

After much lobbying and advocacy from WWDA, the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce agreed to fund a national project to develop information resources for women with disabilities experiencing violence. This was the first time the Commonwealth Government had ever funded a national project on women with disabilities and violence. The project was advertised through a tender process and KPMG were the successful tenderers. WWDA has played a vital role in the implementation of this project. Keran Howe represented WWDA on the Project Management Group, and Karin Swift

represented WWDA on the Project Reference Group. KPMG also accessed the resources and expertise of WWDA through collaborative work with the WWDA Executive Director.

WWDA's publications and programs relating to violence have been picked up by organisations around the world as a model of best practice. WWDA's publication *'More Than Just A Ramp' – A Guide for Women's Refuges to Develop Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans*; is being used by governments, services and organisations in a number of countries, including Israel, UK, New Zealand, Canada, US and more. WWDA's publications relating to violence continue to be purchased by organisations and individuals from within Australia and overseas.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to violence have included:

- Published "Violence Against Women With Disabilities – An Overview of the Literature" (by Keran Howe) in National Women and Violence Journal 2000;
- Published chapter "Women With Disabilities and Violence" in the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Access & Equity Manual which was launched in late 1999;
- Input to the planning of the National Forum on Domestic Violence and Children 2000;
- Inclusion in the International Publication "Loud Proud & Passionate" on WWDA's achievements in the area of violence against women with disabilities 1999
- Published feature articles about violence against women with disabilities in National and International Newsletters;
- Mentoring work with national and international organisations around policy and program development addressing violence against women with disabilities;
- Presentations at International Women's Day Marches, and Reclaim the Night Marches around Australia (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000);
- Provision of expertise and resources to students, researchers, consultants, organisations, and government agencies, including the National Education Centre Against Violence, and the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence;
- Participation in violence research being undertaken by other agencies/researchers at local, state, national and international levels.

## Leadership and Mentoring for Women With Disabilities

During 1999 and 2000, WWDA researched and developed "Taking the Lead" – A Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit for Women With Disabilities. This 275 page Kit was published in June 2000, with funding assistance from Commonwealth and State Governments. "Taking the Lead" has been purchased by organisations and individuals around the world, and is proving to be a useful resource not just for women with disabilities, but individuals and organisations interested in group development, capacity building, gender & disability, and/or leadership and mentoring.

In June 2000, WWDA conducted a National Leadership & Mentoring Workshop for Women With Disabilities, funded by the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women. Seventeen participants were selected via an Application Process to attend the Workshop. In order to be as inclusive as possible, a diverse range of disability types were represented at the Workshop. Representatives from non-English speaking backgrounds and rural and remote areas of Australia were also included. The Workshop provided a balance between theory and practical exercises to illustrate particular theories and models.

In June 2000, WWDA conducted the National "Celebrating Our Abilities" Function, as an adjunct to the National Leadership & Mentoring Workshop for Women With Disabilities. The "Celebrating Our Abilities" showcased leadership styles of women with disabilities in Australia. It included exhibitions from women with disabilities of their artwork, photography, poetry, cartoons, stories, singing, wheelchair dancing, and more. WWDA publications were also exhibited and made available for sale.

The Function was attended by over 150 guests and included speeches from several dignitaries such as Senator Jocelyn Newman (Minister for the Status of Women, and Minister for Family and Community Services); Ms Susan Halliday (Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Disability Discrimination Commissioner), and Minister Christine Campbell (Minister for Human Services Victoria).

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to Leadership and Mentoring have included:

- Published and launched the book “Oyster Grit” – Experiences of Women With Disabilities – by the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network , WWDA’s Victorian Branch, 2000;
- Published articles about WWDA’s Leadership and Mentoring Programs in state, national and international newsletters;
- Sales of WWDA publications on Leadership and Mentoring to state, national, and international organisations;
- Published accessible information about leadership and mentoring of women with disabilities on the WWDA website 1999, 2000;
- Development of funding submissions to non-government, government and corporate sectors for funding to undertake leadership and mentoring activities for women with disabilities;
- Provision of expertise to organisations and agencies with regard to establishing a Leadership and Mentoring Program;
- One to one mentoring of new WWDA members by experienced WWDA members.

## Telecommunications and Information Technology

In 1998, WWDA was successful in obtaining funding from the Commonwealth Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts (DOCITA) to undertake a project to ‘improve the access to information technologies for women with disabilities in Australia’. The need for this project had been identified by WWDA through consultations undertaken with its members. The Project, entitled ‘AccessAbility Online’ was conducted over 2 years and was completed in May 2000. It resulted in the establishment of an Internet access point for women with disabilities in each State/Territory of Australia plus 1 regional location; and the provision and implementation of Internet Training Courses for more than 120 women with disabilities around Australia.

WWDA developed a website in 1998, and regular updating during 1999-2000 has resulted in the WWDA website becoming one of the largest disability related websites available on the Internet. The WWDA website contains over 5000 pages of information, and has been developed a model of best practice in design and content. WWDA has received extensive written feedback on the high standard of its website, from individuals, organisations, and government agencies around the world. In late 1998, WWDA developed an electronic discussion list for women with disabilities (called wwda-discuss). Subscribers to the list include women with disabilities, organisations, academics, researchers and policy makers from both within Australia and around the world. The wwda-discuss list has continued to attract new members during 1999-2000 and has provided an important mechanism for the dissemination of information; consultation; research; support and networking.

In 1999, WWDA conducted a National Survey on Access to Telecommunications for Women with Disabilities. The published report of the study, entitled “Telecommunications and Women with Disabilities” was utilised by a large number of telecommunications industry bodies and policy makers. WWDA was invited to present the research findings to the Business Executives of Telstra, and was also invited to present a Workshop at the national Women and Information Technology Conference in Canberra in early 2000. The Report “Telecommunications and Women with Disabilities” continues to be purchased by individuals and organisations from within Australia and around the world.

In April 2000, WWDA developed a written submission to the National Telecommunications Services Inquiry, established by the Federal Government to investigate the appropriateness of telecommunications services in Australia. On the strength of WWDA's submission, a WWDA delegation was invited to a closed meeting with the National Telecommunications Services Inquiry Taskforce in Canberra, to further discuss issues for people with disabilities in relation to telecommunications.

WWDA has had significant impact on telecommunications policy for people with disabilities, through its representation on a number of national and state telecommunications industry fora. WWDA has successfully secured funding from the National Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grants Program (for 1999-2000, and 2000-2001) to enable the organisation to promote consideration of the interests of women with disabilities in the development of government and industry policy relating to telecommunications.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to telecommunications and information technology have included:

- Registration of WWDA website with over 120 search engines
- WWDA representation on national telecommunications fora: Telstra Disability Forum; Telstra Disability Equipment Programs Committee; Northern Territory Telstra Consultative Council; Australian Communication Industry Forum (ACIF) Disability Advisory Body;
- Provision of expertise on telecommunications and disability to state and national policy, program and project development: Telstra Disability Action Plan; Optus Disability Action Plan; Centre for Research & Learning in Regional Australia Project 'Increasing Women's Participation in the Vocational Education Training Centre'; Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation & Telecommunications Project; National Telstra Community Issues Survey;
- Participation in the National Women On the Line Week – Provision of web based discussion forum on information technology and women with disabilities,
- Provision of expertise to organisations and Internet service providers regarding accessible website design;
- Development of funding submissions for further research into gender, disability and access to telecommunications
- Representation on national and international email discussion lists relating to women's issues; and to disability issues.

## Housing and Women with Disabilities

Much of WWDA's work on the issue of housing and women with disabilities during 1999-2000 has focused on addressing the difficulties women with disabilities experience in accessing supported accommodation, including crisis services such as women's refuges.

During 1999-2000, WWDA has continued to have input to, and lobby the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) for the inclusion of women with disabilities into national policy and program development. WWDA has developed submissions to the National Reviews and Evaluations of SAAP, and in 1999, was invited to participate in the 'Development of a Strategic Framework for SAAP' 1999-2002. This represented the first time that women with disabilities had been targeted by the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) to be included in SAAP policy development.

In September 2000, WWDA was invited to be a guest speaker at a Statewide Forum that looked specifically at the needs of women with disabilities and housing.

## Ageing and Women With Disabilities

In 1999, WWDA developed a submission to the Commonwealth Government's Two Year Review of Aged Care Reforms, and was also represented on the National Work to Retirement for People with Disabilities Research Project, funded by the Commonwealth Government.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to ageing and women with disabilities have included:

- Participation in the National Disability Advisory Committee Ageing and Disability Survey 1999;
- Participation in and representation at the National Consultations for Older People with Long-term Disability 1999;
- Participation in the National Older People & Domestic Violence Project 2000;
- Published 'The Search for the Invisible Workers: Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Older People with Disabilities' in WWDA News (2000);
- Published articles on women with disabilities and ageing on the WWDA website.

## Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities

The area of sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities has been an area WWDA has worked hard on during the past year. It has been a difficult issue for many women with disabilities to talk about, and this is often complicated by the fact that many women with disabilities simply don't have the opportunity or support to speak of their experiences in this area.

In 1999, Ms Cathie Spicer, a student on placement from the Canberra University, undertook a literature review on the sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities. This literature review highlighted the absence of the voices and experiences of women with disabilities in the published literature. The literature review was published in WWDA News and made available on the WWDA website. The article attracted great interest from women with disabilities and organisations from around the world.

In March 2000, as a result of WWDA's advocacy work in the area of sterilisation, the Australian Senate passed a motion calling for Government: to review the legal, ethical and human rights mechanisms in place, or needed, to protect the rights and interests of the reproductive health of women with intellectual and other disabilities, and; commission research on the practice, effects and implications of the sterilisation of women with intellectual and other disabilities.

In mid 2000, WWDA was successful in securing funding from the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women to conduct a National Project 'Sterilisation and Reproductive Health of Women with Disabilities'. This 2 phase national project will involve a background research phase, and a National Forum on "Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities" to be conducted in February 2001 as adjunct to the International 'Disability With Attitude' Conference, Sydney.

## Health and Well-Being of Women with Disabilities

WWDA advocacy work in the area of women with disabilities and health over the past year has seen significant improvements in health service delivery for women with disabilities, particularly at the local service level. It is clear, however that there is still much to achieve in order to improve access to health programs and services for women with disabilities. A major challenge is to see women with disabilities incorporated into national health policies and programs, such as the National Breastscreen and Cervical Cancer Screening Programs.

WWDA has a representative on the Management Committee of the Australian Women's Health Conference, and the National Women's Health Conference in February 2001 will see 4 papers presented by women with disabilities. It will also see, for the first time ever, a keynote address by a WWDA member on health issues for women with disabilities. WWDA has also secured funding to enable women with disabilities to attend the Conference.

In early 2000, WWDA developed a Submission to the National Women's Health Program (NSW) to conduct a 3 year project on women with disabilities and health in NSW. The Project consortium includes: Western Sydney Area Health Service; Cumberland Women's Health Centre; Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA); and the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association NSW. WWDA is also currently undertaking a National Survey on Attendant Care for women with disabilities in Australia.

WWDA has continued to have input into consultations processes conducted by government and non-government organisations around health issues for women with disabilities, as well as provide expertise to students, researchers, consultants, organisations, and government agencies on health and well-being issues for women with disabilities.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to health and women with disabilities have included:

- Co-organiser and sponsor of the International 'Disability With Attitude' Conference (Feb 2001) to include Keynote Address on 'Sexuality, Reproductive Health and Disability', as well as a National Forum on Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities;
- Representation on the Steering Committee of the NSW Family Planning Project Development of Sexual Health Protocols;
- Submission to the Attorney General's Department Consultation Process on the Development of Principles for Handling Personal Health Information;
- Participation in the National Consumers Health Survey (Consumers Health Forum) 2000;
- Input into the establishment of the National Resources Centre for Consumer Participation in Health (1999);
- Input into the development of a National Consumer Participation Tool Kit (Flinders University 1999);
- National Radio Interview on the Relationship Between Women with Disabilities and General Practitioners – An Empowerment Approach to Case Management (2000);
- Participation in the Baker Medical Research Institute Study on Women with Disabilities and Menopause (2000).

## Human Rights

Much of WWDA's issue based programs along with its systemic advocacy activities address the human rights issues facing women with disabilities in Australia. WWDA is represented on the Attorney Generals' Human Rights NGO's Forum, and in 1999, WWDA's representative (Helen Meekosha) presented a paper to this Forum on 'Disability & Human Rights in Australia'. This paper was published in WWDA News in late 1999, and made available on the WWDA website. In August 2000, the paper was selected by the Global Disability Human Rights Campaign (sponsored by Disability Awareness in Action, London) to be presented to the United Nations in December 2000.

In 1999, WWDA developed a Position Paper on 'Human Rights and People with Disabilities' for the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations. This Position Paper was forwarded to a number of Government Ministers, Departments and other relevant stakeholders. Also in 1999, WWDA participated in the National Round Table on Human Rights (sponsored by the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations), and attended by over 36 disability organisations from around Australia. At this Forum, WWDA presented a paper on 'Human Rights Issues for Women with Disabilities'. The issues raised in this paper are to be included the National Disability Human Rights Action Plan, being developed in 2000.

During 1999-2000 WWDA has been represented on the National Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards Project Management Committee by Joyce Deering. This Project has seen the development of draft Standards for Transport, Education and Employment.

WWDA's achievements in improving the human rights of women with disabilities in Australia was recognised in 2000 by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) who have invited WWDA to be a judge of the National Human Rights Awards for 2000.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to human rights and women with disabilities have included:

- Member, Organising Committee of the World March for Women (2000);
- Meetings with Acting Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Deputy Disability Discrimination Commissioner to discuss human rights issues for women with disabilities in Australia;
- Participated in the Global Campaign for a Human Rights Convention for People with Disabilities 2000;
- Input into the Draft National Human Rights Action Plan 2000;

## Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and Indigenous Women with Disabilities

In 1994, WWDA was the first organisation to undertake research in Australia on the specific issues facing women with disabilities from a Non-English speaking background. WWDA's publications 'Emerging From the Shadows – A report on the status of women with disabilities living in Australia', and 'Triple Disadvantage: Women from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds Living in Australia', continue to be purchased by individuals and organisations from Australia and around the world.

WWDA's submission to the National Women's Health Program (NSW) to conduct a 3 year project on women with disabilities and health (in conjunction with Western Sydney Area Health Service; Cumberland Women's Health Centre and the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association NSW) includes components to specifically research the health needs and concerns of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and Indigenous women with disabilities.

WWDA has a of Non-English Speaking Background woman with a disability represented on its National Executive Committee, and a WWDA member is represented on the National Indigenous Disability Network Working Party (2000).

In September 2000, WWDA published the article 'Underlying Expectations – Personal experience of being a NESB woman with a disability', in WWDANews.

## Representation and Systemic Advocacy

A major function of WWDA since its establishment has been systemic advocacy, and representation of women with disabilities on a wide range of National Advisory Bodies, Committees, Industry Forums, and Working Parties. WWDA is represented on many National advisory forums spanning a range of sectors and issue areas. During 1999-2000 WWDA has been represented on the following National Advisory Bodies, Committees, Industry Fora, and Working Parties:

- The Attorney General's Human Rights NGO's Forum;
- The Project Management Group, and the Project Reference Group for the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 'Women With Disabilities & Violence Project';
- The Blind Citizens Australia Disability Representation & Telecommunications Project;
- Telstra Disability Advisory Committee, and Telstra Disability Equipment Programs Committee;
- Australian Communication Industry Forum (ACIF) Disability Advisory Body;
- 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 Fora;
- The Disability Discrimination Act Standards Project Steering Committee;
- The National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations;
- The Australian National Training Authority Disability Forum;
- Centrelink Disability Customer Services Committee;
- Supported Wage Assessment Program Evaluation Committee;
- Judging Panel of the NSW Celebration of Ability Media Awards;
- Global March for Women Management Committee;
- National Indigenous Disability Network Working Party;
- Representation at the ACT Government Reception for the Queen;
- Day Support Options for People with a Disability Project Steering Committee;
- Northern Territory Division of General Practice Management Committee;
- National Disability Advisory Council;
- Coalition for Participating Organisations for Women (CAPOW) Management Committee;
- The National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations Quality Assurance Standards Project;

## Submissions to Government Consultations & Processes

During 1999-2000, WWDA has prepared formal submissions to a number of government enquiries, reviews and consultations. WWDA spent a significant amount of time and energy on submissions to the Government's Welfare Reform Process. A WWDA Working Party was established to undertake consultations with WWDA members on welfare reform, and to develop 2 written submissions to the National Welfare Reform Taskforce. During 1999-2000 WWDA developed the following formal submissions to Government:

- Submission to Commonwealth Government's Two Year Review of Aged Care Reforms (1999);
- Submission to the Draft Report of the National Disability Advocacy Program Review (1999);
- Submission to the Federal Government's Reference Group on Welfare Reform (1999);
- Submission to the Stakeholder Analysis Survey of National Disability Organisations (1999);
- Submission to the National Review of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy (1999-2000);
- Submission to the National Telecommunications Service Inquiry (2000);
- Submission to the Interim Report on Welfare Reform "Participation Support for a More Equitable Society" (2000);

## Funding Submissions

During 1999-2000, Women With Disabilities Australia has developed several submissions for project funding (excluding WWDA's annual submissions for operational funding). WWDA has developed project funding submissions to Government (Commonwealth and State/Territory); trusts and foundations; as well as to the corporate sector. Several of these project funding submissions have been successful, including one from an international organisation based in the USA. During 1999-2000, WWDA developed the following submissions for funding. (S) denotes successful submissions, and (U) denotes unsuccessful submissions:

- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts – AccessAbility Online Grant (1998-2000) (S);
- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts – Networking the Nation Grants Program (1998) (U);

- Department of Health & Family Services – National Disability Research Agenda Grants Program (1999) (U);
- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts – Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grant (1999) (S);
- Department of Family & Community Services (FACS) Office of Disability – Leadership Project (1999) (U);
- Paul Newman Foundation Grants Program (1999) (U);
- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts – Telecommunications Research Grants Program (1999) (U);
- NSW Department of Ageing & Disability – one off project grant (1999) (U);
- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grants Program (2000) (S);
- Canberra Business Centre – one off project grant (1999) (U);
- Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet Office of the Status of Women – Women’s Non-Government Organisations Project Grants Program (1999) (S);
- Department of Family & Community Services Business and Community Partnerships Grant (1999) (U);
- Department of Family & Community Services – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet Office of the Status of Women – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- ACT Department of Health and Community Care – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- ACT Chief Ministers Department – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- Victorian Department of Human Services – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- South Australian Department of Human Services – Contribution to publishing WWDA National Leadership and Mentoring Resource Kit (2000) (S);
- Department of Communication, Information Technology & the Arts – Telecommunications Research Grants Program (2000) (U);
- AMP Sponsorship Grant – WWDA Leadership Function (2000) (S);
- Paraquad Sponsorship Grant – WWDA Leadership Function (2000) (S);
- Macquarie Bank Sponsorship Grant – WWDA Leadership Function (2000) (U);

## Links to the Women’s Sector

During 1999-2000, WWDA has made significant advances in establishing links, and working collaboratively, with the women’s sector. WWDA’s work and increased profile have resulted in significant numbers of women’s organisations taking up WWDA membership, and participating in WWDA activities and programs. The work WWDA has done in the area of preventing violence against women with disabilities is a useful example of the effectiveness of WWDA’s advocacy with the women’s sector. Mainstream services such as domestic violence services; sexual assault services; women’s health centres; community health centres; legal services; advocacy services; housing services and so on are becoming aware of the issue of violence against women with disabilities and are working with WWDA to implement strategies to improve their services for women with disabilities.

Although WWDA was unable to secure funding to send a representative to the Beijing Plus Five meeting in New York in 2000, WWDA was able to work collaboratively with Australian NGO delegates to ensure that issues of concern to women with disabilities were represented at the Beijing Plus Five meetings.

WWDA's links with the women's sector are evident in the number of National Conferences and forums attended by WWDA representatives. Many of these Forums have traditionally excluded or overlooked women with disabilities. Examples of Conferences and Forums WWDA has presented papers at, and sent delegates to include: women's health; women and the environment; domestic violence; women's emergency services; women's human rights; women and information technology; health practitioners; public health; women and leadership; women and the law. Each year, WWDA participates in the Minister for the Status of Women's National Women's Round Table at Parliament House, Canberra. WWDA has also made formal presentations to the National Round Table on issues facing women with disabilities in Australia.

As a result of WWDA's efforts to foster links with the women's sector, WWDA is now well recognised as a co-ordinating point for those seeking information on, or contact with women with disabilities. WWDA provides expertise and resources to service providers, students, women's organisations, government departments and agencies across all sectors. WWDA has undertaken a number of collaborative projects with women's organisations over the past 5 years, and regularly participates in consultations and research undertaken by local, state, national and international women's organisations.

WWDA subscribes to, and participates in electronic discussion forums for women, including the Australian Feminist Policy Network List, and Pamela's List – an electronic network of all national women's organisations in Australia. The WWDA Newsletter is distributed to all national women's organisations in Australia, as well as over 400 Statewide, regional and local women's services and organisations. A register of all national women's organisations in Australia (including contact details) was added to the WWDA website in late 1999, and is updated regularly.

Other outcomes for WWDA relating to links to the women's sector have included:

- Participation in, and presentation at the Minister for the Status of Women's National Women's Round Table at Parliament House, Canberra;
- Representation at the Rural Women's Round table Meetings with the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women;
- Presentations at the Annual International Women's Day Public Rallies and Reclaim the Night Marches;
- Provision of expertise and resources to women's organisations and services across all sectors, including government agencies and publications;
- Collaboration with the National Women's Justice Coalition on an Information Technology Project for Women With Disabilities (1999);
- Sales of WWDA Publications to Local, State, National and International women's organisations;
- Application to the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women for funding to attend the Beijing Plus Five meetings in New York (2000);
- Maintenance of liaison with other women's NGOs to facilitate information exchange relating to the Beijing Plus 5 process (2000);
- Provision of information on issues for women with disabilities to Australian NGO delegates to the Beijing Plus 5 meetings in New York (2000);
- Input into consultations conducted by national women's organisations regarding the Government's Welfare Reform process (2000);
- Collaboration with domestic violence services and women's refuges regarding improving access to services for women with disabilities;
- Input into consultations and research undertaken by local, state, national and international women's organisations;
- Representation on the Management Committee of the Global March for Women 2000;

## Links to the Disability Sector

Despite the fact that the disability sector in Australia has tended to be male dominated, WWDA has continued to be proactive in establishing links and working collaboratively with disability organisations and agencies to ensure that the needs and concerns of women with disabilities are incorporated into organisational and service policies and programs.

During 1999-2000, WWDA has continued as a member organisation of the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations (NCDCO), representing the only national disability peak body which was inclusive of all disability types. WWDA's presence on the NCDCO has been vital in ensuring that gender issues have been incorporated into activities and programs conducted by the NCDCO. In November 1999, WWDA participated in the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations Special Meeting on Disability and Welfare Reform, and in May 2000, participated in the National Coalition on Disability and Income Support (Welfare) Reform Meeting, held in Canberra.

WWDA has conducted a number of projects and research where partnerships with the disability sector have been established. A useful example to highlight this partnership development, is the National AccessAbility Online Project undertaken by WWDA during 1998-2000. This project involved establishing an Internet access point for women with disabilities in each State and Territory of Australia, including one regional location. WWDA developed partnerships and worked collaboratively with a number of disability services and organisations who agreed to house WWDA's computers and offer Internet training and ongoing support for women with disabilities wishing to access the Internet.

WWDA has collaborated with local, State, national and international disability organisations on research and disability projects (eg: Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association NSW; Disabled Women's Network Canada; Blind Citizens Australia; NSW Disability Council; Mobility International USA; Disability Awareness in Action (UK); Israel Rehabilitation Services; Services for Disabled People Leeds (UK); Institute on Independent Living (Sweden); Zambia Federation of the Disabled).

As well as involving the disability sector in research and programs conducted by WWDA, WWDA has also participated in consultations and similar processes undertaken by disability organisations and services. For example, WWDA has participated in a number of consultations undertaken by the National Disability Advisory Committee (NDAC) including: Whole of Government Project; Ageing and Disability Research Project; Older People with long-term disability Project. WWDA has also given presentations to NDAC on issues facing women with disabilities in Australia.

A further example of women's partnerships and collaborative work with the disability sector is evidenced in the International Conference 'Disability with Attitude – Critical Issues 20 Years After International Year of The Disabled Person' to be held in February 2001. WWDA is a co-sponsor and organiser of this International Conference, along with the Social Relations of Disability Research Network; People with Disabilities (NSW); and Access Plus.

WWDA's website contains an extensive number of links to disability related organisations and services within Australia and overseas. The WWDA website also contains detailed information on Commonwealth Government disability related legislation, policies, and programs. WWDA subscribes to and regularly participates in the National disability rights email discussion list, Ozadvocacy.

WWDA is represented on a number of disability reference groups, advisory boards, management committees, etc at local, State, and national levels.

## Organisational Development

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.

Outcomes for WWDA relating to links to organisational development have included:

- Development of Standard Contracts for Consultants; Review and Development of WWDA Position Descriptions;
- Application of the following Standards Manuals to guide organisational development: Disability Service Standards; National Mental Health Standards; Women's Health Service Standards; Standards for Community Health and Other Primary Health Care Services (CHASP);
- Review of the WWDA Financial Management system, development of a more efficient system. Update of WWDA Financial systems to be GST compliant; Participation in Information seminars on the GST and the new tax system;
- Development of custom made WWDA Membership database;
- Development of detailed Strategic & Business Plan which includes: Goals, Key and Continuing Strategies, Targets and Timelines, Resource Implications, Indicators of Performance and Major Outputs for each goal area;
- Publishing of updated WWDA Information and Membership Pamphlet, including development of new WWDA Membership Fee Structure;
- Development of Funding Contract Performance Indicators;
- Commencement of development of a WWDA Procedure Manual, providing detailed information on WWDA Office procedures;
- Development of WWDA Publications for sale Order Form;
- Updating and maintenance of WWDA Website designed in accordance with the 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.
- Establishment of International Electronic Discussion List for women with disabilities;
- WWDA National Executive Meeting Teleconferences conducted every 6 weeks;
- WWDA Newsletter produced – two editions per year averaging 65 pages each edition.

## WWDA Publications (including WWDA Members)

During 1999-2000, WWDA published and supported individual members to publish and produce the following articles, books, kits, and reports:

Cooper, M. (1999). 'The Australian Disability Rights Movement Lives'; *Disability & Society*, Vol.14, No.2.

Frohman, C. & Storr, A. (2000). *'Taking the Lead' – A Leadership & Mentoring Resource Kit for Women With Disabilities*; Published by Women With Disabilities Australia, Canberra.

Frohman, C., Cooper, M. and Salthouse, S. (1999) *'Telecommunications and Women With Disabilities – A Report of the WWDA Telecommunications Survey'*, Published by Women With Disabilities Australia, Canberra.

Hastings, E. (1999) *'Burning Issues for People With Disabilities'*; A Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA); Hotel Y, Melbourne, September 12 1998, Published in WWDANews 1999.

Howe, K. (2000) *'Violence Against Women With Disabilities: An Overview of the Literature'*; Australian Journal on Women and Violence.

La Fontaine, M. (1999). *'Residential Living in the 21st Century'*, Published in WWDANews, Issue 17, December 1999.

La Fontaine, M. (1999). *'To Trachey or Not to Trachey? That is the Question'*. Published in WWDANews, Issue 17, December 1999.

- Meekosha, H. (1999). "Superchicks, clones, cyborgs, and cripples: cinema and messages of bodily transformations" *Social Alternatives.*, Vol 18, No 1. January 1999.
- Meekosha, H. (1999). "*Cyborgs, superchicks and bodies torn asunder: repositioning corporeality in the representation of women with disabilities*"; Paper presented to the Centre for Women's Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, April.
- Meekosha, H. (1999). '*Disability and Human Rights*'. Published in WWDANews, Issue 17, December 1999.
- Meekosha, H. (2000) '*A disabled genius in the family: personal musings on the tale of two sisters*', forthcoming publication.
- Pane, L. (1995). '*Underlying Expectations – Personal experience of being a NESB woman with a disability*', Published in WWDANews, Issue 18, 2000.
- Perry, D. & Keszia-Whiteside, R. (2000). *Women, Gender and 'Disability' – Historical and Contemporary Intersections of "Otherness"* Della Perry and Ruth Keszia Whiteside. In Proceedings of the Abilympics International Conference, September 1995. Slight revisions and additions January 2000.
- Rappaport, P. (1999). '*Wine, Bed and Roses*'. Published in WWDANews, Issue 17, December 1999.
- Salthouse, S. (2000) '*Women with Disabilities and Information Technology*', Paper presented at the Net Gains National Conference, Canberra.
- Spicer, C. (1999). '*Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities*' - A Literature Review. Published in WWDANews, Issue 17, December 1999.
- Victorian Women With Disabilities Network (2000). '*Oyster Grit*' – A Collection of Writings by Australian Women with Disabilities. Published by the Victorian Women With Disabilities Network, Melbourne.
- Woodcroft-Lee, P. (1999). '*The Search for the Invisible Workers: Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Older People with Disabilities*'; Published in WWDANews, Issue 18, September 2000.

## Additional Information

Between September 1999 and September 2000, WWDA has raised \$4378.00 through sales of publications.

Between September 1999 and September 2000 WWDA has raised \$4,855.00 in Membership Fees.

WWDA Membership totals 2077 by end September 2000. WWDA Membership includes 420 organisational members, 1553 individual members, and 104 international organisations.

A copy of all WWDA Publications, reports, submissions etc have been provided (free of charge) to: Commonwealth Department of Family & Community Services Office of Disability; Commonwealth Department of Family & Community Services National Secretariat Program; Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women; the Minister for Family & Community Services and the Status of Women.

## Issues for Consideration for the 2000-2001 Year

There are a number of issues that I would like to raise regarding WWDA that, in my view and experience as WWDA Executive Director, need consideration and possible action over the next year.

### **WWDA Funding and Associated Issues**

At the stage of writing this report, WWDA is uncertain about its future and ongoing funding. At this stage, WWDA is only funded until the end of December 2000. Over the past 3 years, WWDA has received \$112,000 operational funding through the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). We have had no increase in funding, despite the fact that the workload of the organisation has increased substantially in that time. Due to the increased profile of the organisation, our overheads have increased significantly over the past year. For example, our phone bills each month are much higher than there were this time 2 years ago. We also have costs that we didn't have 2 years ago – for example, the website hosting costs and associated costs; the email costs and so on. Much of our operational funding is spent in a few main areas, and these include: rent; postage; photocopying; phone bills; and salaries. All of these costs have increased substantially over the past 2 years and will continue to do so as our profile continues to rise. If we cannot secure increased operational funding in the near future, we are going to have to re-think our budget and look for areas where we can decrease expenditure.

### **WWDA Staffing**

I recognise that this will continue to be a problem whilst WWDA receives the same amount of operational funding, however there are a number of issues that still need to be raised. As most of you will be aware, the current staffing of WWDA is: 1 full time paid Executive Director; 1 paid part time bookkeeper (10 hours per week); and 1 volunteer who works 1 day per week and is paid \$50 per week. All 3 of these staff are currently significantly underpaid for the level of responsibility and the duties they undertake. Christina Ryan (WWDA bookkeeper and Administrative Assistant) has been assisting with administrative duties and has often been required to act in my position if I am away or off line working on specific projects. Christina is significantly underpaid for the level of work she is doing. Our 'volunteer', Kate List, is invaluable to the organisation – she also has a Phd and extensive experience, yet we can only afford to pay her \$50 per week for her work at WWDA. I am concerned that the WWDA National Office staff are working significantly more hours than they are paid for, and this additional unpaid work is necessary in order to keep up with the demands of the organisation and the ever increasing workload. Should any of the WWDA National Office staff leave the organisation, it will be almost impossible to attract new staff when the positions are so poorly paid, and a level of additional unpaid work is necessary. The WWDA Executive Director position is significantly underpaid in comparison to equivalent positions within other similar organisations.

The workload and demands on WWDA continue to increase, particularly as the organisation expands its profile and activities. It has to be said, that there is no way that WWDA can continue its high standard work without more staff. WWDA needs at least the following: a full time Executive Director; a full time Administrative Assistant; a full time Policy and Research Officer; a part time Bookkeeper, and a number of volunteers. I have no idea how we achieve this, but I am deeply concerned at the demands on current WWDA staff, and the issues of occupational health and safety in this context.

### **WWDA National Executive Committee (NEC)**

It has been of concern that over the past year the National Executive Committee has not worked particularly well, due to resource constraints, the fact that they all operate at a voluntary level, the fact that there are increasing demands on their time to support the ever increasing workload of WWDA. I am concerned that, as WWDA continues to grow, the demands on the WWDA NEC will increase, and I think we need to look at strategies as to how we can more effectively support and resource the NEC members.

### **State and Territory WWDA Groups and Branches**

This has been a long standing problem for WWDA. Firstly, it needs to be said that the majority of WWDA State Groups and branches (where they exist) are virtually completely unfunded, do not have their own premises and have found it incredibly difficult to establish WWDA groups without funding.

The WWDA National Office simply does not have the resources (either human or financial) to assist State groups to become established.

It has become clear that in the majority of States and Territories, the notion of establishing strong and viable WWDA groups is going to be increasingly difficult without funding support. It is also apparent that the WWDA National Office simply cannot initiate and establish WWDA branches and groups in the various States/Territories. There is simply not the resources within the National Office (either human or financial resources). Unless we can secure specific funding to employ a Community Development Officer (or ideally 1 Community Development Officer for each State and Territory) we will continue to face difficulties in establishing and maintaining State/Territory groups.

### **Review of the WWDA Constitution**

In light of some of the issues raised so far, I think that WWDA needs to review its current Constitution to see whether it is still meeting the requirements of the organisation. We may need to review aspects of the current Constitution to incorporate a 'sunset clause' for serving members of the NEC, so that there are opportunities for up and coming WWDA members to become part of the NEC. We may also need to review ways that NEC members are elected to the NEC.

### **WWDA Working groups**

One mechanism that has appeared to work reasonably well over the past year, has been the establishment of various WWDA Working Parties (some have worked better than others). WWDA NEC did discuss and implement last year, WWDA Portfolio areas, which included areas such as: Violence; Education & Employment; Welfare Reform/Income Security; Telecommunications; Membership; Human Rights; Links to the Women's Sector etc. A proposal that we could consider, is that instead of having State/Territory groups (or an adjunct to State groups if they do exist), is to establish more formalised issues based Working Groups, whereby each Working Group would have a Convenor, and WWDA members could be encouraged and/or co-opted to join the Working Group of their interest. Issues coming into the National WWDA Office could then be referred to the relevant Working Party. Each Working Party would be required to submit reports (probably quarterly or bi-annual) to the WWDA National Office, which could then be fed into the WWDA Annual Reports and reports to funding bodies. An example can be used here to highlight how this proposal might work. WWDA has a Telecommunications Working Party, with currently 5 reps from around Australia. This Working Party has been successful in attracting a small amount of funding to undertake their activities. The funding contract is signed and managed by the WWDA National Office. The Telecommunications Working Party has a Convenor, and the members of the Working Party all participate in a wide range of activities. The Working Party writes the Progress Reports for the funding body (which are signed off by WWDA National Office) and copies are kept in the WWDA National Office files as a record. The benefits of an approach like this means that the WWDA workload is distributed more amongst the members of the organisation, thereby relieving the workload placed on the WWDA National Office, and the WWDA NEC.

### **WWDA Newsletter**

Because of the increasing work of WWDA, plus the increased state, national, and international interest in the organisation, the WWDA Newsletter has now grown to become more of a 'magazine'. The WWDA Newsletter is highly regarded and we get much feedback on the high standard and quality of the Newsletter. The average length of WWDA News is getting to be around 60-80 pages per edition. Because our membership has grown substantially, we are now sending the Newsletter out to more than three times the number of individuals/organisations that we were sending it to about 2 years ago. We also have a lot more international organisations on our mailing list, which increases the postage costs. Prior to the implementation of the GST, many printing companies increased their prices, and then, when the GST came into effect, the prices have increased even further. Each edition of the WWDA Newsletter costs around \$9,000 to produce (and this figure does not take into account the time it takes to

write it, which is done by the WWDA Executive Director). Several WWDA members have given feedback that they like the WWDA Newsletter, particularly the length and the diversity of information covered in each edition, but they would like more editions each year. The problem we face is that we simply do not have the resources to produce more than 2 editions of the Newsletter each year, and if our membership and overheads continue to grow, we may in fact only be able to produce 1 edition per year. If we do not receive any increase in our operational funding, we are going to have to find other ways of financing the WWDA Newsletter. It may be possible to find a corporate sponsor of the Newsletter, but this will take an investment of time and additional resources.

### **NEC/WWDA Planning Day**

It is some time since the WWDA NEC has met face to face. WWDA can no longer afford to fund a face to face Annual General Meeting. However, if the organisation is refunded post December 2000, we may have to look at whether it is possible to hold a face to face Planning Day for the WWDA NEC. The WWDA Strategic and Business Plan needs to be reviewed and we need to revisit WWDA's goals and strategic directions to see if they are still the priorities of the organisation. Although we probably don't have the operational funds to conduct such a Planning Day, we may decide it is important enough to try and secure specific funding from another source for such a Planning Day.

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## **WWDA Treasurer's Report – By Joyce Deering**

During the past financial year, WWDA has maintained its many activities despite some uncertainties with funding and project deadlines. At the end of this period, we are still in "the black"!

Project money that was carried over from 98/99, Accessibility On Line Project and the Global Fund for Women's Leadership and Mentoring Project has now been acquitted fully with both projects being very successful. As one who participated in the Accessibility On Line Workshops held here in Darwin I am very thankful for the experience and learning.

Receiving several Awards during the year for WWDA's excellence has assisted in remaining solvent, and being recognised for WWDA's special contribution to the disability industry, in difficult times, has been a worthwhile accolade.

Again this year our AGM will be held as a Teleconference, as our funds will not stretch to cover a face to face meeting. Maybe in 2001.

I wish to thank the office staff of WWDA, who have maintained the bookwork, and particularly our Executive Officer, Carolyn Frohmader, who ensures that we keep within our tight budget.

While the future of disability funding is still unclear, it is very clear that WWDA's standing in the area is well known and accepted of the high quality it has set, and will continue to do in future years.

The WWDA Audit report for 1999-2000 is included at the end of this document.

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## **WWDA State and Territory Reports**

### **Victorian Women with Disabilities Network (VWDN) Report**

In many respects Victorian Women with Disabilities Network (VWDN) has had a highly successful year. Despite its minimal financial resources we have held two major events, produced two newsletters and represented the needs of women with disabilities at a number of forums.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting in February was attended by 56 members and the following members were elected to the Management Collective:

Margherita Coppolino (Convenor)

Caroline Bowditch (Co-Convenor)

Lindy Corbett (Secretary)

Pamela Menere (Treasurer)

Karleen Plunkett

Glen Tomasetti

Keran Howe (VWDN representative to WWDA National Executive Committee)

In May Samantha Jenkinson was co-opted to the Collective and has assumed responsibility of Membership as co-secretary.

### **‘Oyster Grit’**

Also at the annual general meeting the book ‘Oyster Grit’ was launched. ‘Oyster Grit’ is a collection of writings by Australian women with disabilities. The stories in ‘Oyster Grit’ are highly personal and provide thought-provoking insights into the experiences of women with disabilities. At the launch contributors to the book read excerpts of their work and in launching the book Rhonda Galbally reinforced the importance of personal stories in raising awareness of issues facing women with disabilities. The launch was attended by 90 members and friends of VWDN. Margaret Cooper and Betty Bone co-ordinated the ‘Oyster Grit’ project and continue to administer sales orders on behalf of VWDN on a voluntary basis.

### **Leadership and Mentoring Dinner**

In June as part of the Leadership and Mentoring Workshop, VWDN co-hosted a wonderful dinner “Celebrating our Abilities” with WWDA. The dinner highlighted the creative talent of women with disabilities. This dinner was the first of its kind for VWDN and was attended by 150 women. It is planned to hold further dinners on an annual or bi-annual basis.

### **Advocacy**

Keran Howe and Caroline Bowditch have represented VWDN and WWDA on the Woorarra Working Group which continues to advocate for resources to address the needs of women with disabilities experiencing violence. In early 1999 this working party developed and submitted a proposal to the Victorian government for a project that co-ordinates service provision between the disability and domestic violence sectors and to raise awareness within these sectors of the needs of women with disabilities who experience violence. This project has not yet been funded and we continue to advocate for its funding.

VWDN has provided ongoing support and advice to the Queen Victoria Centre to ensure its access for women with disabilities. Margherita Coppolino represented VWDN in liaising with the Queen Victoria Centre.

VWDN was also represented at a conference on Women and Sport held by the Victorian government highlighting the needs of women with disabilities in relation to physical activity and recreation.

Keran Howe represented VWDN and WWDA at the first Premier’s Women’s Consultation. This conference provided an opportunity to highlight the needs of women with disabilities in relation to health and safety.

## WWDA Northern Territory Report

During this year, I have continued to pass on to members of Integrated disAbility Action in Darwin the progress and programs that WWDA is involved with, and loads of general information that has implications for all in the disability family.

The ground work that was done by Sue Salthouse to “house” the Accessibility OnLine Project computer in Darwin city, and the organising of the Internet Access Workshops for women with disabilities at the NT Open College were much appreciated. There were 12 women who began the course, enthusiastically, with a very helpful tutor, several did not last the distance, there were 2 hour sessions once a week for 5 weeks. A certificate of “introduction to the Internet” was forwarded to those who completed the course. I am very glad that I took the opportunity to do the course, and am now more adventurous in using the “net”. I distributed WWDA newsletters and pamphlets to those on the course.

With the review of peak disability organisations currently being held, I have raised WWDA’s concerns with other committees I attend and asked for their support.

One of the best International Day for People with a Disability was held in Darwin, Palmerston, and Casuarina on December 3rd 1999. Tho’ not just a day, it was almost a week with lots of activities by school children at the Official Launch, wheelchair contests between local politicians, a “come and try” sports day at our indoor sports stadium, and displays and stalls at the 2 major Shopping Centres during the next week. WWDA information was available at these activities. This year’s IDPD celebrations will be much smaller, but still having a recreational theme.

There have been many meetings that I represent WWDA informally, particularly consultations called at short notice.

## WWDA Queensland Report

In my work this year for WWDA I have been involved in participating as the WWDA member of the World March for Women Committee. This has involved monthly teleconferences. A series of cultural events celebrating women have been planned in various Capital locations around Australia in October. I believe further information has been posted on WWDA’s email discussion list.

I have also participated in the KPMG reference group for their project on women with disabilities and domestic violence. This has involved having a say in the design of various visual materials (posters, cards etc) designed to raise the awareness of women with disability to the serious issue of domestic violence. In March this year I participated in a face-to-face reference group meeting in Melbourne where we looked at the draft material. Since then, further comment has been sought from women with disability around Australia and to my knowledge the material is currently in the production phase.

This year has been a very busy year for me, both personally and professionally. In October 1999 I accepted the position of Network Support Worker for an emerging network of and for people with disability in Queensland called Queenslanders with Disability Network. This position, although extremely rewarding, has been consuming the majority of my time. It started out as a part time two-day a week position and has at times blown out to four. It has also involved travelling to other parts of Queensland. I am also currently on a total of six voluntary management committees for disability and women’s organisations (including my WWDA commitments).

I have also had a trying year personally. As Carolyn and many on the NEC would know, I had a bad run with my health last year (my most recent hospitalisation was in March this year) and have spent a good part of this year restoring my health and general wellbeing. I have also had to deal with the shock of my husband having to undergo major neurosurgery in August for a condition relating to his disability. As you can see, it hasn’t been the easiest year to deal with.

## WWDA Tasmania Report

The group has not formally met this year, but we do have a small network in place, which has been useful for us for as reported last year it has been hard to get together because of our own commitments.

The computer has limited usage also but those that have used it have gained knowledge from it. I have been in contact with Guide Dogs in Launceston because they have several blind ladies who would like to access the computer because it has the Jaws program on it which they are able to use, I have received some training in the use of this program and have found it very interesting.

The Tasmanian Network would like to congratulate all those involved in the completion of The Leadership and Mentoring Kit which some of us here were involved in, it is pleasing to see the project finished at long last and to see that it is a fine publication which will be of use to women with disabilities and many other groups and organisations.

We would also like to congratulate Vanessa Cini on gaining her new employment, which we hope she will find interesting and challenging.

## WWDA ACT Report

WWD(ACT) has run its usual series of monthly meetings during 2000:

February: Training of Guide Dogs and owners; Guide Dog Assoc; Karen Willins (Speaker);  
March: Getting information for inclusion in the News; Manager, Disability News, Media and PR Section, DFACS; David Jones (Speaker);  
April: Rundown on Disability Programs; Manager, Disability Programs, ACT Health and Community Care; Lynne Grayson (Speaker)  
May: Social Meeting, including a report on achievements and activities of those present; (No Speaker)  
June: Social Meeting (No Speaker)  
July: Summary of activities of NICAN; Manager, NICAN; Kate Lyttle (Speaker)  
August: Summary of services offered to support students with disabilities; Disability Liaison, UC; Dee Jackson (Speaker)  
September: Outing to Floriade  
October: Summary of programmes offered by DAD; DADA; Lois Selby (Speaker)  
November: Outing to Questacon  
December: Outing to Restuarant

The meetings have been attended by a small core of members, about 5 per meeting. Because of lack of funds, we have not been able to subsidise cab charges for members to attend meetings. This has cut attendance by 20%.

WWD(ACT) has experienced ongoing problems with its Hardware Host for the @ccessability Online Project's computer, which is place with the ACT Pensioners' Club. The computer is operational, but communication with the club management is difficult. WWD(ACT) has not been able to identify an alternative organisation to house the computer, but is continuing to search for one. The membership still does not have access to the computer. Sue Salthouse continues to try to negotiate with the Club's management.

A total of 15 women undertook Internet/Email training for the @ccessability Online Project, early this year. The course was subsidised by an additional grand from the Australian National Training Authority, which enabled two tutors and a support worker to assist with the course. This grant was obtained through by the Disability Support Officers of the CIT.

WWD(ACT) has continued its project work, funded by Healthpact. This year has seen the undertaking of the final phase of a three-phase research and development project undertaken by the branch. In Phase 1, a preliminary survey of women with disabilities in the ACT was undertaken. In Phase 2, a series of follow-up focus groups were conducted. This year has seen the undertaking of Phase 3, a peer support skills training program. In this Phase, a community development officer was recruited. Then course participants were recruited through the community noticeboards in Radio and Newspapers. The training course was called 'Women with Disabilities supporting each other'. The thrust of the program has been to give the participants skills to increase their confidence, and develop strategies to manage their disabilities, so that they can support others in the community. The graduation ceremony was presided over by the ACT minister for health, Michael Moore.

The project has been nominated for an award for Excellent Outcomes for a Healthpact funded project.

The report for the initial preliminary survey of women with disabilities in the ACT and region, undertaken in 1999, is almost complete. Healthpact will be approached for funding to print copies.

The branch continues to suffer from low attendance at meetings, and a lack of members to undertake executive roles. Convenor, Di Palmer has become ill in late September. Despite having resigned last December, Sue Salthouse has continued to do the bulk of the organisational work for WWD(ACT) in 2000.

The findings of the Phase 1 survey will mean altering the structure of the yearly program of WWD(ACT).

At WWD(ACT)'s instigation, 5 disability groups have organised and are hosting a farewell, to be held at Civic Square on October 12, for the ACT contingent of the Paralympic team.

WWD(ACT) is represented on a number of disability rights committees: ACT Accessibility Committee (Di Palmer); ACT Disability Advisory Council (Di McGowan, Kim Palmer, Adrienne Croker (support worker to Kim)).

## WWDA South Australia Report

WWDA South Australia has not done anything on formal basis for the 99/00 financial year as a group. The last meeting we had was on May 1999 – a fundraising activity. The highlight of the year was the IT training organised by the National WWDA Office. Following the IT training many more people phoned, and still do, to attend the course including many service providers wanted to enrol their clients and were willing to pay for it. I gave them the National Office (your) contact details including the email address.

A formal opening date (August 25) was organised with the support from Disability Information Resource Centre (DIRC ) to open the WWDA section of the library and the WWDA computer. We needed some money to pay for the food etc, DIRC was going to pay and coordinate the mailing list. I sent an email to your Office asking whether any money was left from the Access Online Project. We are trying to get some money together or sponsorship to open it in the new year. If the National Office can contribute at least \$500 towards the cost we would be much appreciated. Many members due to various reasons, mostly health and other obligations are unable to make the commitment to meet regularly and we don't have the funds to pay for room hire, mail-outs etc.

My role has been as the SA WWDA contact person as opposed to SA WWDA Representative/Coordinator. I respond to inquiries, mail information out, help with access to resources, attend workshops & meetings etc. Because of the car accident I was in last year, injuring my left side including neck, side of face, ear etc (also my Polio affected side), I have been limited in doing much.

### **Projects anticipated for 2001**

Formal opening of WWDA section of DIRC library and the WWDA Computer to the public. Not many people know about it and we want to publicise it. We need at least \$500 from the National Office, even half of that would be of help, if possible please.

Employment rights awareness – Working Women’s Centre, United Trades & Labour Council and other Unions are supporting to run a campaign creating awareness of the rights of employees with disabilities regardless of where they are at eg sheltered or ‘open’ employment. Would the National WWDA Office endorse this project? It would add weight to get sponsorship & support but we are targeting all person’s with disabilities.

Adoptees with disabilities project – integration into the community ie which community (their culture of birth, disability community, Australian community??). It appears many of us are growing up in isolation and as many of us are adults now their needs are becoming an interest to the Government. This is of personal interest and have got the support from the Adoption Services to access its funds.

Rehabilitation in Sri Lanka – women (families) with disabilities. An SA group has been formed. Males & females within the group representing own gender and within the context of community & family rehabilitation issues. As you may know, although gender roles are distinctive the women holds much of the responsibilities for family issues. I am travelling overseas on 15th November to 26th January. I am visiting number of rehabilitation centres in Sri Lanka, India & Hong Kong with the hope to link them with Australia. We had 1 fund raising event for medical equipment this year.

I represent WWDA on the following Committees etc:

South Australia Working Women’s Centre – Management Committee.

WorkCover Corporation – Disability Focus group – as I now work Fridays, I have not attended however, in the process of organising Nancy Taylor to attend representing WWDA.

Options Coordination – Disability & Violence Project Steering Committee.

National Indigenous Disability Networking Party (in the process of setting up a SA group).

JAZ-ANZ Technical Committee – mailing list and attended the workshops held in Adelaide.

## WWDA Western Australia

No Report received.

## WWDA Newcastle Report

This past year for Women With Disabilities Newcastle have been greatly missing our leader and Coordinator, Dallas Barwick through illness. Even though Dallas has been ill, she has still been doing the coordination work from home. She has been greatly missed by all of our members. Due to Dallas being ill all year, none of our plans were set in concrete as usual. All our meetings were educational, interesting and enjoyed by all members who came.

### **February 2000**

The first meeting was to organise the course on accessing the Internet. Many of the women were able to access the Internet and most have become more aware of what there is available through the Net. Some have even purchased their own computers to use the Internet at home. We also had three women telling their life histories. It was very interested and was well presented by all three members. We all learned a lot from the three individual histories.

### **March 2000**

March was another month learning how much each individual life history are so different from the next, after hearing three more life histories. One member spoke of how she left a nursing home to live in the community. Another woman talked about a very rare disability which was very educational and

interesting to everyone at the meeting. We are trying to compose a book on women with disabilities in the Newcastle and Hunter area.

#### **April 2000**

The April meeting was spent making hats and preparations for our next meeting, which was going to our fourth anniversary.

#### **May 2000**

May's meeting was a time for celebrations, with a disco, drink and food galore. There is one thing that Women With Disabilities Newcastle do know how to do, and that is how to celebrate with a party. All of our members were there, even Dallas was there but only for a short time. We all thought that having Dallas there was the best part. We also had a large birthday cake which everyone enjoyed.

#### **June 2000**

Janice Kennedy led a discussion on the book titled "Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars". The book was about relationships. Janice's discussion went very well and we all enjoyed it very much.

#### **July 2000**

The July meeting consisted of a video night. The video was called "The Other Sister" about a girl with an intellectual disability, and it was very interesting for all who watched it.

#### **August 2000**

August's meeting was a very unhappy night, as we were told about the sudden death of a foundation member, Wendy German. After hearing about Wendy, we did not feel like doing anything, so we had another video night. The video was from the ABC so the title cannot be published. It was a great video.

#### **September 2000**

The September meeting was a games night. Everyone went home happy and with a prize.

#### **Summary**

This year has been hard with Dallas being ill and Wendy's death, but we all got through by sticking together and helping each other when we needed it. We also have seven new members, so we are still growing well.

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## WWDA Representatives Reports

### Top End (Northern Territory) Division of General Practice Consumer Reference Group – By Joyce Deering

I was invited to apply as a consumer Representative from WWDA on this committee, and have attended 3 meetings, held monthly. Consumer reps are also encouraged to be an Adviser to one of the Working Groups of the Division. I will attend the Continuing medical Education group, think that GPs might have need to know more about disability?!

The TEDGP has many funded programs in the community, including a Mental Health Program in schools, where GPs are involved. There are 8 consumer reps, one of whom chairs the meeting, plus 2 members of the Division working in the Administration, who keep us up to date with current programs. It is an active group, lunch is provided, and sitting fees are paid to your organisation! I look forward to sharing on this committee over the next year.

## Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards Project Steering Committee – By Joyce Deering

At the time of writing this report for WWDA's AGM in October 2000, there has only been 1 full meeting of this committee, held in Melbourne in April 2000.

There has been good progress made on the Draft Education Standards. The 2 Education reps on the committee have just completed visiting all capital cities to consult with consumers, educationalists, parents, and others interested in the Draft Standards. The hold up by DEETYA of the release of the Draft did not help the process, thankfully it was available through other Net sites.

I attended the meeting in Darwin, led by Sandi Seymour, which was reasonably attended. A follow up meeting for those who attended to talk about their responses is being organised.

The long delay to enacting legislation to put the Transport Standards in place, Federally, States and Territories is causing great concern. The building Access Standard is progressing slowly, given the many issues that need to be considered and resolved positively. No report was given on the Employment Standard.

Preliminary work is being done on a Communication and Information Standard, and there are requests to look at an Accommodation Standard.

There is expected to be a meeting of the Steering Committee in the near future.

## WWDA Telecommunications Working Party – By Margaret Cooper, Sue Salthouse, Vanessa Cini, Joyce Deering

The "Representation on Telecommunications Advisory Groups for Women With Disabilities in Australia" Project Grant was awarded to Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) by the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, to assist the organisation to: *"Provide funding for the representation of the views of women with disabilities on matters affecting them as consumers of telecommunications"*

To achieve this goal, the objectives of the project were to:

- provide fora for the discussion of telecommunications issues which affect women with disabilities,
- focus community, government and industry attention on telecommunications issues affecting women with disabilities, and
- promote consideration of the interests of women with disabilities in the development of government and industry policy relating to telecommunications.

The funding has primarily enabled WWDA representatives to actively participate in industry telecommunications fora. It has also enabled WWDA to seek feedback from WWDA membership as to their views on current telecommunications issues. Through its pro-active networking, WWDA has been able to focus intra- and inter-disability group attention on telecommunications issues.

### **Background to the Project**

In 1999, WWDA applied to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts for funding to assist women with disabilities in Australia to get fair representation on advisory boards concerned with the development of telecommunications. WWDA's project proposal had been developed in response to needs identified by women with disabilities in Australia in research and consultations carried out by WWDA which found that adequate access to telecommunications was a major priority for women with disabilities. Many women participating in the consultations felt that women with

disabilities had been 'left behind' as telecommunication technology, and most particularly information technology, has developed in recent years.

### **WWDA Representatives on Telecommunications Advisory Groups**

Since receiving the DCITA Project Grant, WWDA has expanded its representation on Advisory Groups and now has four representatives on Telecommunications Advisory Groups. Other members are co-opted to contribute their relevant expertise from time to time.

The four representatives are:

Vanessa Cini – Australian Communications Industry Forum Disability Advisory Board (ACIF DAB); ACIF Consumer Group

Margaret Cooper – Telecommunications Disability Consumers Representation Project (TEDICORE)

Joyce Deering – Telstra Consumer Consultative Council (TCCC), Darwin

Sue Salthouse – Telstra Disability Forum; Telstra Disability Program Consumer Advisory Group (CAG)

### **Seeking Feedback**

WWDA has instigated a series of teleconferences between its various representatives on Telecommunications Advisory Groups (TAG). These teleconferences were held in January, April and June 2000. TAG representatives report on the activities of other community/government group representatives to these teleconferences, and ensures that WWDA presents a united front on issues taken to Advisory Boards, and prioritises the issues to be discussed.

WWDA has had considerable positive feedback about the content and design of its Website, including comments from individuals and organisations, both government and non-government, and both within Australia and overseas. In the period 1 February to 1 May 2000, the website had 2140 individual visitors (as distinct from individual "hits"). The method of monitoring visits to the website has been altered to make it more comprehensive, so that it will be possible to monitor which pages are being accessed, etc. The website is updated on a bimonthly basis.

### **Information Dissemination**

The last issue (December 17, 1999) of the WWDA newsletter carried three articles updating members on telecommunications issues. This newsletter has a distribution of 2000, including all members of federal parliament. The October and December issues of the WWD(ACT) newsletter carried articles on telecommunications. A talk about telecommunications was given to members at the June 2000 meeting. The December issues of both newsletters had pamphlets on Telstra Disability Services, (the Directory Assistance Disability Hotline, and the Disability Equipment Program).

A report on the Telstra Disability Forum was given to the October teleconference of the WWDA National Executive Committee. There has been contact with 3-6 disability organisations in each state, in order to find a suitable location for an accessible computer/internet facility. These free access internet sites for women with disabilities were funded through a WWDA-Networking the Nation (NTN) Project. A computer has been placed in each capital city and Newcastle. Discussions with each organisation were about the findings of the WWDA Telecommunications Survey.

There has been contact with the a number of community organisations and disability organisations, as well as with the disability officers and internet course coordinators of the TAFE in each capital city and Newcastle. A training course to introduce women with disabilities to the Internet has been run in each capital city, plus Fremantle and Newcastle. More than 120 women with disabilities received "Introduction to the Internet" training. This was also funded by the WWDA-NTN Project. Discussions with TAFE have also centred on the findings of the WWDA Telecommunications survey.

### **Conclusion**

The funding from the Project Grant has enabled WWDA members to represent the views of women with disabilities on matters affecting them as consumers of telecommunications. The representatives

have developed insights into the telecommunications industry and the operation of service providers. This is enabling the development of strategies which may enable use to bring about better access to telecommunications for women with disabilities. The WWDA telecommunications representatives have also consolidated their expertise in various aspects of telecommunications – adaptive technology, disability equipment, computer access and the internet, and are able to contribute much to inquiries and discussions about telecommunications.

## Telecommunications Consumer Representation – By Sue Salthouse

During the past year, I have been one of four WWDA members representing the organisation on telecommunications issues. This has involved Industry Representation on:

### **Telstra Disability Forum**

I became a member of this forum in September 1999. The Forum meets twice per year in Melbourne. The combined meetings of Caucus and Forum last for one full working day. At the September meeting I gave a 1-hour presentation of the results of the Telecommunications Survey conducted by WWDA in 1998/99 (having been the analyst of survey results). M.Cooper, the survey designer, talked on the background to, development and distribution of, the survey.

At the March 2000 meeting, Telstra gave further information about its Disability Action Plan, Multi Media Payphone development, TTY Payphones and general payphones. Forum members expressed concern about the lack of input from people with disabilities prior to the development phase.

Disability Forum meetings are preceded by Caucus meeting so that issues relating to Telecommunications from the various disability sectors represented can be discussed and brought before the Disability Forum in a co-ordinated manner.

### **Telstra Disability Equipment Program Consumer Advisory Group**

I am a representative on this 4-member group. Appointment to the Group was by formal application, and members have been appointed to serve a 2-year term. Terms of reference are being drawn up by Telstra Disability Program staff, with reference to and in co-operation with group members. This is an ongoing dialogue. The group had its first meeting prior to the meeting of the Telstra Disability Forum in March 2000. This was an orientation meeting where the scope of the Telstra Disability Equipment Program, and a number of access issues in relation to people with disabilities was discussed. Members expressed concern about the urgent need for consultation with disability representatives prior to any development phase.

I have been involved in the following additional activities:

### **Additional Presentation**

I presented a workshop on ‘Telecommunications and Women With Disabilities’ to the Net Gains conference in Canberra in March 2000. This was organised by the Network of Women in Further Education.

### **Telecommunications Services Inquiry**

I participated in the panel hearing of the TSI on 28 June, with Carolyn Frohmader, Margaret Cooper, and Vanessa Cini, concentrating on aspects of barriers to internet telecommunications affecting women with disabilities, eg. access, cost, design, and on service provider organisations.

### **Teleconferences**

The 4 telecommunications consumer representatives kept in touch and co-ordinated activities by holding Teleconferences on 26 January 2000; 4 April 2000; and 25 June 2000.

### **Additional Communications**

I held conversations with DIRC (SA), B.Levett Telstra re multimedia pay phone; and with the Telstra CBA office re TTY locations.

## **Report on the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 'National Women with Disabilities and Domestic Violence' Project Management Group – By Keran Howe**

In 1997, the Commonwealth Government launched the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy (PADV), a 25 million dollar initiative between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories to work together towards the common goal of preventing domestic violence across Australia. Two national PADV projects were proposed: a Community Education/Awareness Strategy, and Development of National Endorsed Competency Standards. Neither of these proposals identified women with disabilities as a target group. Following pressure from WWDA and other organisations concerned with violence experienced by women with disabilities, the PADV Taskforce funded a national project on women with disabilities and violence. This was the first time Commonwealth Government funded national project on women with disabilities and violence.

The project was tendered and KPMG were the successful bid. A Project Management Committee was established to provide advice to the Consultants. National organisations concerned with disability or with domestic violence were represented on the Committee. The Project Management Committee met 4 times during the project and provided advice on the content and format of resource materials. The materials target both women with disabilities and those who may come in contact with women with disabilities experiencing violence.

Members of the Committee consistently argued for additional resources to ensure that the resource materials launched would be supported by training programs and resources to ensure that both the disability sector and the domestic violence were able to support women who sought help as a result of the information they received. At the time of writing WWDA is not aware of additional funding being provided to this end and continues to press for this need to be addressed.

## **National Disability Work to Retirement Project Steering Committee – By Sue Large**

This Steering Committee is still meeting even though the project was set for completion in June last year. There have been several problems experienced by the steering committee in getting the consultant to finish the project to our satisfaction. After much discussion with the Department of Family and Community Services the consultant produced a final report, which they and the steering committee were not happy with. This report is now not to be used for publication or re-use.

The Department of Family and Community services has now taken on the task of rewriting this report so that it can be published and be a useful resource manual. The steering committee is still meeting mainly now by teleconference because of the amount of time it has taken to finalise the project we are to be given input to the new report when the bulk of it has been rewritten to see that it would now cover everyone's requirements.

## **Day Support Service for Older Adults with a Lifelong Disability Steering Committee – By Margaret Cooper**

## **Project**

Because WWDA is known to be interested in ageing with long-term disabilities, I was asked by the consultants to represent consumer issues on this short-term research steering committee. This national project is surveying the population of people, usually with profound disabilities, who need day support care, looking at the programs offered and also issues raised by consumers, carers, and program design.

The project has 9 terms of reference. Membership of the Project Steering Committee includes:

Therese Young FaCS

Tom Mangan Dept of Disability & Ageing NSW

Charley Hodgson, Department of Health & Human Services, Community Rural Health Division  
Disability Services Tasmania

Carmel Laragy, Research Unit, Disability Services, Victoria

Gill Pierce, Carer's Association Victoria

Peter Prendergast ACROD

Margaret Cooper WWDA

## **Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Disability Forum – By Pamela Menere**

The requirements of the contract were built in to the Forum workplan, and the following reports against elements of the workplan for the period March – September 2000.

### **A National Plan of Action for People with Disabilities in VET**

Bridging Pathways and the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation were endorsed by MINCO on 30 June 2000. The Forum provided extensive support to the process of developing the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation. Representation on the Implementation Taskforce – Forum Members Mark Bagshaw, Lynn Hammond and Craig Harrison.

### **Consult with key stakeholders regarding the Implementation Plan and provide feedback to the Disability Implementation Taskforce**

Support and advice for the Implementation Plan sought from key constituent groups (refer to February 2000 Report to the ANTA Board). The consultations / feedback provided opportunity at every level of the development process to manage expectations of constituents / key stakeholders.

### **Communications Strategy**

Following MINCO endorsement the Forum prepared a comprehensive communications strategy for ANTA to promote the documents within the VET and disability sectors. Activities undertaken to date include:

- Media Releases forwarded to key national and state and territory VET and disability publications.
- Article provided for peak body newsletters and web pages.
- Development of tailored Powerpoint presentations to assist states and territories in promoting the implementation plan to key stakeholders
- A presentation by ANTA and Mark Bagshaw (Forum Chair) at the ACROD National Conference (peak body for disability service providers) in July 2000.
- Presentations to be made at forthcoming Pathways V conference on: Collaborative arrangements between the VET and disability sectors; Working with National Training Packages; The Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation

### **Consultation with Equity Managers**

Regular liaison with State / Territory Training Authority Equity Managers to provide Forum activity updates.

### **Liaison with Department of Family & Community Services**

Craig Harrison, (Deputy Chair) attended meeting between ANTA and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services to provide support to ANTA's position as outlined in the ANTA / Disability Forum paper submitted to the Welfare Reform Reference Group.

Progressed the development a network of key project officers from State offices of the Commonwealth Department of Family & Community Services in order to facilitate information sharing between VET and disability sectors.

### **Industry Advisory Groups**

Issues regarding the role of ITABs in increasing participation and outcomes for people with a disability in VET are now addressed within the Blueprint for Implementation.

### **National Training Packages**

Issues identified regarding the access and equity component of National Training Packages are now addressed as actions within the Blueprint for Implementation.

### **Australian Student Traineeship Foundation / ANTA Disability Forum VET in Schools Project**

Project manager appointed. Three school-industry partnerships have received funding for a range of transferable "lighthouse" projects designed to increase participation rates of young people with a disability in Structured Workplace Learning Programs. Priority of this area is evidenced by the high number (87) of submissions received.

### **Blueprint for Implementation Monitoring/Advisory Group**

Advice provided to ANTA regarding:

- membership;
- role of the new group
- draft Terms of Reference; and
- knowledge and skills required by the new group.

### **ANTA National Marketing Strategy**

Advice provided to key ANTA staff preparing options for strategies to address issues identified for people with a disability within the Marketing Strategy.

### **Forum Web Page**

Major update of web page in order to maintain currency. Positive feedback regarding the depth of information contained on the web page has been received from constituents. It is anticipated that this web page could provide a base for a web page for the incoming advisory group.

### **Group Training**

The Review of the Group Training Expansion Program highlights that while there has been a steady increase in commencements by those with a disability, Group Training Companies highlighted the problem of the resource limitations which worked against their gaining successful outcomes for equity groups. Further work is required to improve access to and outcomes from new apprenticeships by people with a disability.

### **Professional Development of Forum representatives.**

Members have recognised the opportunity for development and expansion of skills through operation at a national level, and an understanding of issues surrounding the development and progression of a national agenda.

### **Recommendations for the ANTA Board**

It is recommended that the ANTA Board:

- Note the achievements of the Forum against the workplan.
- Refer the issue of increasing access to new apprenticeships through Group Training Companies to the Group Training Steering Committee
- Note the opportunities provided to representatives through membership of the Forum.

## Centrelink Customer Service Disability & Carers Reference Group – by Margherita Coppolino

In the year 2000, I would have attended three all day committee meetings held in Canberra on the following dates:

31st March (My first meeting)

28 July (Main subject covered was Welfare reform initiatives)

10 November (Yet to attend)

This committee has covered issues on appropriate communication strategies and formats for people with disabilities, Disability Awareness Training for Centrelink staff, complaints compliance communication strategies for customers, feedback on their Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan, Welfare Reforms trials and others items to do with Disability & Carers.

## Supported Wage System Evaluation Reference Group – by Margherita Coppolino

In the year 2000, I would have attended 4 half days committee meetings in Canberra on the following dates:

5th June (Introduction meeting for consultant (KMPG and the Reference Group)

27th July (Feedback on first rounds on focus group)

13 September (First KMPG draft report of the SWS Evaluation)

16 October (Half a day meeting with Paul Cain from National Caucus to write response to Draft report)

8 November (Meeting in Canberra to sign-off KMPG Final Report)

This reference group has not only reviewed the evaluation of the history of SWS, has also explored how SWS can be broadened to non government disability employment agencies to use and who should provide the on the job support: Employer or Agency? Assessors Training and Assessment tools also generated a lot of discussion on what needs to change. In overall, the SWS Structure and Framework has been successful in placing mainly younger men with disabilities into low skilled positions.

## Certification Quality Assurance Employment Agencies Trial Audits – by Margherita Coppolino

In May 2000, selections were held by the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations via written applicants. I was notified in June that I was chosen as one the fifty people with disabilities Australia wide to be trained as a Quality Assurance Employment Agency Audit Technical Expert.

On 29-31 July, I attended three days of Quality Assurance Technical Experts Training in Sydney.

Since then, there has been three teleconferences with the Technical Experts to assist us setting up an Association. Selections were undertaken for Technical Experts to work with Jas-Anz (who will over see and accredit the auditing bodies). I was chosen as one of the three Technical Experts. I have just signed a contract with Jas-Anz to be part of their team and waiting for dates to do the accreditation of the auditing bodies to happen before Christmas this year.

In October, the company who has been employed by the department interviewed me, to do an evaluation of the training provided for the Technical Experts. This meeting took three hours to complete and will be giving ongoing feedback to this company throughout the trial.

## Australian Women's Health Network Management Committee – By Carolyn Frohmader

I have been a member of the Australian Women's Health Network (AWHN) Management Committee for several years now. The major responsibility I have had over the past year in this capacity has been to assist in the coordination and planning for the National Women's Health Conference which is being held in Adelaide in February 2001. Earlier this year, I wrote a funding submission on behalf of the Network to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (National Disability Conference Funding Grant Program) to request funding to enable women with disabilities to attend the Conference. The submission was successful and we have received \$7,500 to send women with disabilities to the Conference, and to address any specific access requirements (such as attendant care, sign interpreters etc). Several WWDA members will be presenting papers at the AWHN National Conference. As a member of the AWHN Management Committee and Executive Director of WWDA, I was able to formally request that AWHN include a keynote speaker position for a woman with a disability. This was agreed to by the Conference Program Committee and represents a significant achievement for WWDA, as the AWHN Conference in February will be the first time ever that a woman with a disability has given a keynote address at a national women's health conference. Helen Meekosha (WWDA Vice President) will be giving the Keynote address at the Conference.

Other activities I have undertaken in my role as WWDA rep on the AWHN Management Committee, have included: the establishment and ongoing management and facilitation of a National AWHN Email Discussion List (called awhn-list); input into the AWHN Newsletter (including writing articles about WWDA); participating in teleconferences of the AWHN Executive; and collecting the AWHN mail from the Dickson Post Office in Canberra.

## National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations – by Carolyn Frohmader

As the Executive Director of WWDA, I represent WWDA on the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations which meets every 3 months in Canberra, and is made up of 9 national peak disability consumer organisations. The Executive Directors of each organisation meet every 3 months, and every 6 months, the Presidents of the organisations also attend. During the past year, the Caucus has held 3 special meetings, which have been broadened out to include organisations from the disability sector. The first of the special meetings was on Welfare Reform, and was held at Parliament House. This meeting was held in late 1999, not long after the Government announced its intention to undertake a process of Welfare Reform. The second special meeting of the Caucus was a National Meeting on Human Rights. WWDA prepared a paper to present to this meeting on Human Rights Issues Facing Women with Disabilities (the paper concentrated specifically on Violence and Unlawful Sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities). The meeting also involved the commencement of a process to develop a National Action Plan on Human Rights for People with Disabilities. The third special meeting of the Caucus was held in May 2000 in Canberra, and was a special meeting on Welfare Reform, to address the Interim Report on Welfare Reform released by the Welfare Reform Taskforce. The meeting was attended by representatives from around 40 disability organisations in Australia. The meeting involved undertaking an analysis of the Interim Report, and preparing a collective response to Government from the disability sector. The meeting also included a meeting with 2 members of the Welfare Reform Taskforce. The organisations represented at the meeting were very concerned that the

Welfare Reform Interim Report did not appear to have included any of the issues raised by disability organisations in their original submissions to the Taskforce. Of particular concern was the fact that the Interim Report made no discussion or analysis of the costs of disability (and the need for a specific Disability Allowance). The costs of disability had been raised by almost every disability organisation who had prepared a written submission to the Welfare Reform Taskforce, in the initial round of consultations. A further outcome of the Special Meeting of Caucus on Welfare Reform was to develop a paper for the Welfare Reform Taskforce on the Need for a Disability Allowance, and how this could be achieved.

In August 2000, I also met with the Deputy Disability Discrimination Commissioner (Graeme Innes) to discuss human rights issues for women with disabilities, and to discuss ways that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) could be more proactive on some of the issues facing women with disabilities. Graeme Innes discussed the fact that HREOC have not been receiving enough complaints from people with disabilities, and urged the need for more complaints. I raised the issue of concern that at this stage, complaints to HREOC cannot be made via email, or through the HREOC website. Graeme agreed to take this on board and see if this could be addressed within HREOC.

## National Women's Round Table Report – By Christina Ryan

I attended 1999 National Women's Round Table as a mentor for the WWDA representative Karin Swift. The round table is a two day event, held every year by the Minister for the Status of Women. The current Minister is Senator Jocelyn Newman.

The round table was originally planned for August 1999 with most national women's organisations invited to attend. In previous years the round table was made up of around 50 women's organisations, plus the Minister and her personal and departmental staff. The round table was postponed and was eventually held in October 1999 with a very reduced attendance of around 15 national women's organisations. Also invited were a similar number of "eminent women" selected by the Minister.

There was a great deal of anger in the women's movement at the lack of consultation about the changes to the round table, and no explanation about the role of the eminent women who attended. A facilitator controlled discussion so that much of it was centred around the personal experience of the eminent women. The representatives of the organisations persistently brought the conversation back to the concerns of their members, but overall it was a difficult task.

Another feature of the round table were issues groups. This forced the representatives to select an area of concern to their members, rather than being able to have input into the broad cross section of issues that were raised. WWDA joined the health discussion group, which meant we missed out on the leadership group, and the education group (for example). When we raised our concern about this we were told that the women in those groups would take account of women with disabilities. Many representatives of organisations were unhappy about the assumption that anyone could represent the interests of their members.

The issues discussed were based on what the women present had mentioned in their personal introduction at the beginning of the first day. Most of those present were unaware that this would form the basis of discussion and felt that we were not given reasonable opportunities to form the agenda.

Despite these difficulties WWDA had a successful round table. We pushed the issue of sterilisation on several occasions and succeeded in having this put on the agenda for further work over the coming year. Part of that work is now being undertaken with the grant received for WWDA's national sterilisation forum. We also raised access to telecommunications on numerous occasions. WWDA also demonstrated the continuing need for women with disabilities to be consulted. We were consistently a part of the

discussions amongst representatives of national women's organisations when decisions were being made about responses to the Minister's agenda and round table outcomes.

A national women's round table has not yet been scheduled for 2000.

## National Indigenous Disability Networking Party – By Chandra Sluggett

The Minister for Family and Community Services (FaCS), Senator Jocelyn Newman and the Minister for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), Senator John Herron joined forces to set up a working party that looks at ways of dealing with the issues of helping Indigenous people with Disabilities. The National Disability Advisory Council (Council) established as part of the Commonwealth Government's commitment to creating better links between government and people with disabilities, their families and carers.

The Terms of Reference of the Working Party are to consider and report to the Council and ATSIC on the following two main issues:

1. Determine the feasibility of establishing a National Indigenous Disability Network, including the proposed process and stages for its establishment, and the purpose and scope of the Network; and
2. Identify the nature and prevalence of disability in Indigenous communities by examining current research.

## Attorney General's NGO Forum on Domestic Human Rights – by Helen Meekosha

There has been one meeting that I have attended since the last WWDA AGM. It was held in Canberra on April 7 2000. The minutes of the meeting can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.law.gov.au/aghome/legalpol/cld/human/WelcomeHR.html>

Fifty eight people attended of which a third were government officials. Prior to the AG's arrival, I expressed my concern that there had been numerous human rights issues and apparent violations. These issues had been brought to the attention of the government by many community groups, yet it appeared that these issues had not been acted on and in some cases had deteriorated. I raised the question with the NGO reps whether our presence merely legitimated the government, given that the forum was used by the government as an example of good practice in reporting to the UN. Many groups appeared to agree with me, and it was decided that as many human rights groups as possible should issue a media release at the end of each meeting. This was made possible by the presence of Margaret Reynolds, ex Senator and NGO adviser, who had access to parliamentary offices!

Given that mandatory sentencing in Western Australia and the Northern Territory was the main human rights issue under discussion, 25 NGOs combined to issue a statement condemning the continuation of this system of punishment and the general retreat by the Federal government from its commitment to human rights. I raised with the AG the question of the sterilisation of girls and women with disabilities.

I queried what the government was doing in the light of the motion passed through the Senate on the forced sterilisation issue. The AG responded that he was not aware of the motion, he had regular discussions with the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Wooldridge. The AG stated "it was inappropriate for such procedures to be performed for family convenience and Family Court approval was required. The matter required the education of doctors of their relevant responsibilities".

I also supported the National Ethnic Disability Alliance on the topic of discrimination against immigrants with a disability.

The next meeting of the Forum is in November, and there has been a discussion list set up of NGO members to discuss the lack of confidence we feel in the AG's ability to advise his colleagues on their human rights obligations, and what the Forum NGO members can do in terms of action.