

# Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA): Application for Funding to the Office of Disability January 1998 – June 1998

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Prior to June 1998, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) was funded on a six-monthly basis by the Office of Disability, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, and was required to submit an application for ongoing funding every 6 months. In June 1998, WWDA was able to successfully negotiate with the Department that WWDA be funded on at least an annual basis. This is WWDA's application for funding for the period January 1998 – June 1998. Written by Helen Skeat, (then Executive Officer). Copyright WWDA 1998.

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## Organisational Background

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is a broad-based and inclusive national organisation of women with any type of disability. WWDA seeks to ensure equal opportunities in all walks of life for all women with disabilities. It is currently the only national multi-diagnostic disability organisation with individual, grass roots membership. WWDA works in partnership with other disability organisations and disseminates information to women with disabilities, carers, service providers, government and the media. WWDA links women with disabilities from around Australia, enabling issues of common concern to be identified and addressed.

WWDA develops strategies for change, in line with the Principles and Objectives of the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986. These strategies include linking service providers, promoting understanding of issues in service provision, ensuring the relevance of legislation and programmes to women with disabilities and monitoring their effectiveness. This is in the form of targeted campaigns, or ongoing representation in change processes such as the development of Standards under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

WWDA promotes the representation of women with disabilities by women with disabilities in state, national and international arenas. WWDA is actively working in coalition with key women's organisations, families and carers and service providers to promote the issues for women with disabilities.

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# The Need for a Women with Disabilities Advocacy Organisation

WWDA was formed out of the experience of women with disabilities who found that they were 'slipping through the net' in both the disability and women's fields. Some of the issues which WWDA addresses are gender-specific, while others relate to the disability community but are experienced differently by women because of systemic gender discrimination.

Women with disabilities are disadvantaged in several key areas when compared with other Australian women, men with disabilities, and the population as a whole. Australian Bureau of Statistics data from the 1988 and 1993 surveys of, Ageing Carers, and Disability show that women with disabilities in Australia:

- are less likely to be in paid work than other women, men with disabilities and the population as a whole;
- have a lower participation rate in the labour market than the above groups (eg 52.6 % for men with a disability, compared to 39.9% of equivalent women);
- earn less than their male counterparts (50% of women compared to 36% of men earn less than \$200.00 per week and 33% of men compared with 16% of women earn more than \$400 per week ABS 1993);
- women are less likely than equivalent males to receive a tertiary education (36% as compared to 49%);
- have a greater unmet need for help than equivalent males;
- are less likely to own property than equivalent males;
- are more likely to be institutionalised than equivalent males;
- are less likely to be married, or live in a dual income household; and
- are often in situations which make them vulnerable to violence.

WWDA is dedicated to researching and articulating the reasons for the disadvantages which women with disabilities experience, and to working to initiate appropriate changes.

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## Achievements to Date

WWDA represents the interests of its members, and works for change through a variety of methods. The activities of WWDA are in line with the principles and objectives of the Disability Services Act 1986. WWDA has made substantial achievements over the past year.

### **Modelling good practice**

WWDA has a commitment to modelling best practice in all that it does. For example, WWDA has embarked on a project to write a DDA Action Plan for one SAAP-funded women's refuge. In addition to this, a model for the development of Action Plans will be developed and distributed to all SAAP-funded women's refuges in Australia.

The philosophy guiding WWDA in this project has been that the development of the Action Plan should model the recommendations it will make. We have been at pains to ensure the inclusion of women with disabilities in all aspects of the project. The consultancy team is made up entirely of women with disabilities with diverse backgrounds. The project is guided at a national level by a

reference group of women with disabilities and at a local level by a working group which is half women with disabilities and half women from the SAAP sector. Each stage of the project is designed to maximise the ongoing benefits of the project by ensuring the full involvement of both the SAAP sector and women with disabilities.

### **Linking individuals**

WWDA now has state bodies in most states, and plans to form bodies in the remaining two states in June 1997. Some of these groups are well established, while others are still in the early stages of formation. WWDA has initiated some new activities to support these groups, based on our experience over the past two years. These include linking the state groups via a 'bulletin', devoting every second NEC meeting to discussing state group issues, and developing electronic networks between state groups. In addition, WWDA employs a Membership and Development Officer 15 hours per week to work with the state groups and assist in their development.

In addition, WWDA has formed national networks of women with particular interests; these currently include mothers with disabilities and lesbians with disabilities. There are plans to extend these networks to include indigenous women and women from non English speaking backgrounds.

### **Participation in key processes of change**

WWDA is an active participant in key processes of change, including:

- WWDA members on two committees for the development of DDA Standards;
- Executive Officer of WWDA as deputy convenor of the DDA Standards Project and members of the Attorney General's Working Group on DDA Standards
- Submissions to DDA Standards development processes;
- Representation on other key advisory bodies such as the Australian National Training Authority's Disability Forum, the Data Reference Group in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and AUSTEL and Telstra consumer committees.

WWDA believes that issues of access and equity are of concern to all Australians. Because of our links to women's organisations, WWDA has also been able to take issues which are of concern to women with disabilities, into the broader women's community. For example, several national women's organisations have now become active in the area of accessible transport and the DDA Transport Standards. WWDA has a key role to play in continuing to inform and mobilise the broader community.

### **Initiating change to ensure the full participation of women**

WWDA has identified three areas of priority: Health; Housing; and Links to the women's movement.

#### **Health and housing**

Anecdotal evidence has long indicated that despite the fact that women with disabilities experience disproportionately high levels of violence, they have little or no access to services related to violence. Two recent government reports have confirmed this lack of access. WWDA has been working on this issue for approximately one year, and has already yielded results. WWDA presented a paper to the National Domestic Violence Forum, and the recommendations of the Forum included women with disabilities in general and specific recommendations. As a result of this, the Office of the Status of Women has funded WWDA to carry out two project which are currently underway:

- a national workshop for key experts on violence against women with disabilities
- development of a DDA Action Plan for a SAAP funded women's refuge

In addition to this, considerable interest and goodwill has been generated among agencies in the violence sector through WWDA's activities.

### **Access to health services**

The WWDA Victorian body (Victorian Women With Disabilities Network), supported by WWDA nationally, has completed a project documenting women with physical disabilities' experiences with the health and community services.

### **Links to the women's movement**

WWDA is now represented on the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Australia Participating Organisations of Women (CAPOW!). In addition, WWDA has pursued working relationships with key women's groups such as the Women's Emergency Services Network.

### **Newsletter**

WWDA produces a quarterly newsletter, which is distributed to all members, and other key individuals and organisations. The newsletter provides a venue for communicating current information and lively debate. It is also a means by which WWDA keeps members informed about changes and processes which will affect them, the ways in which members of WWDA can be involved.

### **External networks and links**

WWDA has forged strong alliances with key women's, disability, and other community organisations. This includes membership of the:

- Coalition of Australian Participating Organisations of Women (WWDA represented on Steering Committee)
- DDA Standards Project;
- National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations;
- Working parties for the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action;
- Consumers' Health Forum;
- Consumers Federation of Australia;
- Older Women's Network; and
- Women's Emergency Services Network.

### **Public debate**

WWDA has continued to contribute to public debates on topics such as euthanasia, access to court, and public housing reforms. WWDA does this through presenting papers and attendance at conferences, publishing articles and addressing meetings.

### **Inclusionary practices**

As WWDA is an organisation of already marginalised people, it recognises that there are certain women who are additionally at risk of marginalisation, such as rural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and women from non-English speaking backgrounds. WWDA has begun to address this by forming national networks of women with disabilities who have in common some other feature – two networks are already set up, and more are planned.

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## **Summary of Goals and Strategies for 1997-98**

**GOAL 1: To research, analyse and take action on issues of concern to women with disabilities.**

Strategies:

- research, analysis, reports and policy recommendations;
  - consultation;
  - service and support for state and regional groups in their research and policy work;
  - research and advocacy by state and regional groups;
  - planning;
  - maintenance of existing, and creation of new networks;
  - create debate and publicise the reports and policy;
  - maintenance of library of resources.
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## **GOAL 2: To initiate systemic change activities in specific areas of concern to WWDA members.**

Strategies:

- collaborating with the Women's Emergency Services Network on developing a model for service delivery;
  - conducting primary research;
  - preparing a submission to the National Forum on Domestic Violence (precursor to the Summit);
  - forming a reference group within WWDA of women who have either experienced violence, or worked in women's services, or both;
  - continuing to provide information to relevant people leading up to the National Summit on Domestic Violence.
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## **GOAL 3: To continue WWDA's high quality of input into systemic change initiated by other bodies.**

Strategies:

- networking WWDA representatives on committees;
  - ensuring accountability of representatives; and
  - mentoring of potential representatives.
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## **GOAL 4: To continue to establish and support WWDA state bodies and groups around the country.**

Strategies:

- visit existing WWDA groups;
- assist the setting up of new WWDA state and regional bodies;
- regularly contact WWDA state bodies and groups;
- to assist state bodies with incorporation and funding proposals; and
- to encourage organisations to become members of WWDA, and to ensure that organisations are represented on the National Executive Committee.

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## GOAL 5: To increase the membership and public profile of WWDA.

Strategies:

- attract new members;
- maintain the WWDA database;
- production of Newsletter; and
- production and dissemination of quality research.

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## GOAL 6: To further improve the organisational system and structure so as to best serve WWDA's membership and its aims and objectives.

Strategies:

- strategic planning;
- the National Annual General Meeting;
- implementation of HRM strategies;
- provision of effective communication systems;
- production of a high quality newsletter providing information about the organisation and recent research; and
- training.

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## Proposed Budget

### **Salaries**

(Equivalent to one full time Executive Officer position and one half time project officer, including on costs) = \$66,000

### **Travel**

To four states = 2000.00

travel allowance 18 days @ 80.00/day = 1440.00

transport 18 days @ 40.00/day = 720.00

### **Conferences**

(funding for WWDA representatives to attend conferences including Round Table meeting)

2 airfares = 800.00

Travel allowance 8 days @ 100.00/day plus personal care & hire of equipment = 1000.00

Transport = 250.00

Registration = 300.00

### **National Annual General Meeting**

(2 reps from each state plus 2 staff)

fares = 6000.00  
accommodation 7/double/\$250.00 = 1750.00  
taxis =600.00  
catering \$50.00/person = 700.00  
venue = 400.00  
printing = 200.00  
attendant care and equipment hire = 350.00

### **Publications**

Newsletters x 4 = 7400.00  
conference papers etc = 1000.00  
books and materials and membership of other organisations = 800.00

### **Auditors Fees**

Fees = 600.00

### **Other Costs**

office insurance = 600.00  
volunteer insurance = 200.00  
rent @ \$450.00/month = 5400.00  
telephone (including teleconferences) = 8000.00  
electricity = 500.00  
sign language interpreters \$75/hour x 13 hours = 975.00  
stationery, office equipment and postage = 5000.00

**GRAND TOTAL: \$112,985.00**