

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA): Mid Term Operational Funding Grant Report January 1998 – March 1998

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is funded on an annual basis by the Office of Disability – Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. Each year, WWDA is required to provide a mid-term and end of grant report to the Office of Disability. This is WWDA's mid-term grant report for the period January 1998 – March 1998. Written by Carolyn Frohmader, Executive Officer. Copyright WWDA 1999.

Goal 1: To research, analyse and take action on issues of concern to women with disabilities falling within WWDA's policy priorities – including: Housing; Links with the women's movement; Leadership; and Violence.

Area 1: Violence

This area has been one of major activity for WWDA over the last three months. WWDA has undertaken a range of activities and projects in this area, and the feedback and responses from WWDA members on the issue indicates that violence against women with disabilities in Australia is a significant and growing problem. The major work undertaken by WWDA in the last 3 months in relation to this area is outlined here.

National Women With Disabilities and Violence Workshop

The National Women With Disabilities and Violence Workshop was conducted by WWDA in Melbourne, on February 21-22 1998. This workshop was the first of its kind in Australia and came about in response to identified unmet needs of women with disabilities. Twenty eight women with disabilities from around Australia participated in the workshop. The participants were selected through an Application Process conducted by WWDA. The workshop was very successful and received very positive feedback from all those involved.

The final report of the workshop is currently being written. An Interim Report has been written and sent to the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women (who funded the project). A copy of the Interim Report has been included with this report to OOD. A sample of evaluations from the workshop participants has also been included.

There have been several spin-offs to date as a result of the workshop, even though it has only been 6 weeks since the workshop was held. Some of the activities which have occurred as a result of the workshop include:

- a presentation to a national conference by a WWDA member on the issue of gender, disability and violence;

- the women from Queensland who attended the workshop have formed a network and are meeting on a regular basis – part of these meetings are to look at ways the Queensland women involved can assist in the implementation of strategies developed at the workshop;
- one of the workshop participants from NSW has organised with the Management Committee of the service where she works (a Rape Crisis Centre) to run a 2 day seminar in June which will look at access to sexual assault services for women with disabilities;
- women who attended the workshop have participated in WWDA consultations on developing a submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper and process;
- WWDA, in conjunction with women who attended the workshop, are looking at ways to broaden and further develop a National Women With Disabilities and Violence Reference Group;
- women with disabilities are contacting WWDA requesting information on violence and also information about how they can access women's shelters and other violence services;
- preliminary discussions have occurred between WWDA and WESNET regarding mechanisms and processes to enable collaborative approaches to projects and activities.

Development of a Women With Disabilities and Violence Information Kit

WWDA developed an Information Kit on Women with Disabilities and Violence for the national workshop in February. The Kit was developed in 2 parts – the first part was developed late last year and was given to all workshop participants several weeks prior to the workshop so that they were well informed on the issue. The second part of the Kit was developed in January and February this year and given to the participants on the day of the workshop.

Development of the Kit involved a significant amount of background research and production. The Kit is now very comprehensive and contains:

- an extensive bibliography on women with disabilities and violence;
- an Australian bibliography on women with disabilities and violence;
- a summary of current Internet sites which deal with the issue of women with disabilities and violence;
- the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy, including details of projects funded to date on a State by State basis;
- an update on the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Strategy;
- a paper written by Madge Scerihha for WWDA on women with disabilities and violence;
- an excerpt from the WWDA report 'More Than Just A Ramp';
- an annotated bibliography on women with disabilities and violence;
- 2 documents which summarise Australian research projects on women with disabilities and violence;
- a document detailing initiatives occurring in each State and Territory on domestic violence generally, and specific initiatives on women with disabilities and violence;
- contact information for Domestic Violence Crisis Services in each State and Territory, including availability of TTY's within these services;
- 2 poems about violence against women.

WWDA has received several requests from individuals and organisations wishing to purchase the Kit (one request even came from England!) – these requests have come despite the fact that WWDA has not promoted the Kit as being available yet. One of the problems for WWDA here, is that the organisation needs to secure some funding to enable around 100 copies of the Kit to be produced in order to sell them. WWDA anticipates that the Kit could sell for around \$50.00. A Master Copy of the Kit has been produced by WWDA in large print format and on disk. A copy of the completed Kit has been included with this report.

Development of a Submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper

A major area of activity for WWDA over the last 3 months has been the development of an

organisational response to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper and process, being undertaken by the National Domestic Violence Legislation Working Group (Attorney General's Department). A consultative process was undertaken by WWDA to generate input from members into the development of a submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper. (More details about this work has been provided under Goal 3 in this report).

Participation in Research Projects on Violence

WWDA has participated in 2 major research projects on violence against women. One of these projects is a national research projects being undertaken by Keys Young Research Company in NSW and funded through the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women. The social research study is aiming to identify reasons why women who experience domestic violence do not report the violence to the police or other violence services. WWDA effectively lobbied the research company to include women with disabilities in their study. WWDA was then able to act as a broker between the research consultant and women with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence. WWDA located 6 women with disabilities to participate in the study as well as a woman with a disability to be interviewed as a key informant. WWDA was also able to lobby the research company to ensure that all the women with disabilities participating in the study were paid for their time.

Another research project WWDA is involved in is a project being undertaken by MIMS Consultancy in Brisbane and funded through the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. The project is to research relevant information strategies, infrastructures and supports required by women with disabilities in relation to domestic violence. WWDA is participating in the consultation phase of the project and will continue to liaise with the research consultants during the other stages of the project.

DDA Model Action Plan Process

The two reports from the WWDA projects on the DDA Model Action Plan were launched at the National WESNET Conference in December last year. WWDA met with the Commonwealth SAAP personnel earlier this year to discuss strategies which would see SAAP funded women's refuge around Australia implement the Model Action Plan process. A meeting of Commonwealth/State SAAP Committee was held in March and WWDA's 2 reports were tabled for discussion at that meeting. Unfortunately, at this stage it appears that the Commonwealth SAAP department is unable to distribute the reports to SAAP funded services for WWDA. Issues around DDA training of domestic violence workers in SAAP funded services was also not taken up by the SAAP Committee at this stage. WWDA is currently beginning discussions with WESNET on developing strategies and working collaboratively to encourage women's refuges to develop DDA Action Plans.

WWDA continues to receive requests for copies of the reports and requests for information about the DDA projects. The two reports are also currently being produced in braille and on cassette tape.

Area 2: Links with the women's movement

WWDA hasn't been as proactive in this area as we would have liked, but commitments with the violence workshop and the resignation of the Executive Director in March has meant that some areas have not received as much attention as they could have. Despite this, WWDA has continued to establish and develop links with other women's organisations. WWDA has been able to develop good working links with the following women's organisations:

- The Network Exchange of Women's Services
- WESNET
- National Women's Justice Coalition
- Disabled Women's Network (Canada)
- The Australian Women's Health Network

More information about the networks developed with these organisations is provided in this report under Goal 5.

Area 3: Leadership

As outlined in an earlier report to OOD, WWDA held a Leadership Workshop late in 1997. The report from this workshop is currently being prepared for printing. WWDA is currently prioritising the recommendations stemming from the workshop. One of the recommendation areas was around the concept of mentoring. WWDA has done some work to implement the recommendations developed around mentoring. For example: WWDA members who have not previously represented WWDA at government forums, workshops etc, are being mentored by more experienced members of the organisation, and through this are being given the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills. Two WWDA members recently presented papers at national conferences for the first time. More information about these presentations is provided later in this report under Goal 5.

Area 4: Housing

The main work that WWDA has done over the last 3 months in relation to housing has been around access to women's refuges and crisis services for women with disabilities.

Goal 2: To initiate systemic change activities in specific areas of concern to WWDA members.

Area 1: Funding Submissions

Over the last few months, WWDA has developed several submissions for funding. The submissions which have been developed have been in response to areas of need as identified by women with disabilities through consultation processes undertaken by WWDA.

Networking the Nation Submission

The Networking the Nation Grants Program is an initiative of the Federal Government and is managed through the Commonwealth Department of Communication and the Arts. Networking the Nation aims to assist the economic and social development of regional, rural and remote Australia by funding projects which: enhance telecommunications infrastructure and services in those areas; increase access to, and promote use of, services available through telecommunications networks, and; reduce disparities in access to such services and facilities. WWDA has developed a proposal for funding to look at the telecommunications needs of women with disabilities in remote areas and to provide education and training in the use of information technology (particularly the Internet). WWDA has met several times with the Networking the Nation secretariat and is currently developing the proposal further for consideration in early June.

National Disability Research Agenda Grants Program

In January, WWDA developed a proposal to the National Disability Research Agenda Grants Program (Office of Disability, Department of Health and Family Services) for an information technology research project. The aim of the project is to work with women with disabilities (all disability types) to investigate the specific requirements which will enable and promote their access to the Internet and associated technologies. The project will also research work conducted in this area by women with disabilities organisations overseas, particularly the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) in Canada. Decisions on the outcome of the proposal should be available by end April 1998.

Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women – Women’s Non-Government Organisations Grants Program

WWDA is currently developing a submission for funding to the Women’s NGO Grants Program, managed by the Office of the Status of Women. Applications to this grants program close in early May.

Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care – Disability and Violence Project

WWDA developed a detailed submission for this project late last year. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in securing the project. However, the successful applicant (a Queensland based consultant) has been liaising closely with WWDA regarding the project.

Global Fund for Women

WWDA is currently developing a submission for funding to the Global Fund for Women. The Global Fund for Women focuses primarily on female human rights and provides a small grants program for women’s organisations which are based outside the United States.

Area 2: Research of Grants Programs and Funding Sources and Development of Database.

WWDA has begun to research information about available grants programs and funding sources. The following mechanisms have been utilised to research the information:

- searching the Internet;
- literature searches – through libraries, CD Roms and reports;
- the Directory of Philanthropy;
- the NSW Funding Directory book.

All the relevant information is being developed into a database. WWDA has begun contacting the various organisations/foundations etc to get copies of funding guidelines, criteria and application forms. The information is then being fed into a database and filed. Once completed, the information will be separated into fields which contain information relating to grants programs etc by State/Territory/regional/local areas. This information will then be given to State WWDA groups as part of their ongoing group development. Groups will then be given assistance where necessary to develop submissions for funding etc.

Goal 3: To continue WWDA’s high quality of input into systemic change initiated by other bodies.

Model Domestic Violence Laws Submission

A major area of activity for WWDA over the last 3 months has been the development of an organisational response to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper and process, being undertaken by the National Domestic Violence Legislation Working Group (Attorney General’s Department). A consultative process was undertaken by WWDA to generate input from members into the development of a submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper. This involved organising with the Office of the Status of Women for copies of the Discussion Paper to be produced in braille, so that women with impaired vision could participate in the consultation process.

The WWDA consultation process included several stages. Firstly, copies of the Discussion Paper were circulated to WWDA State/Territory branches and also to all the women who had attended the Women with Disabilities and Violence Workshop in Melbourne in February. Information gathered during this

process was then used to formulate a draft submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper. WWDA also liaised with the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET); the National Women's Justice Coalition; and the NSW Disability Council in the development of a draft response. Once the draft had been formulated, it was then sent back to members and relevant organisations to comment on. The draft was then further revised and a final document was developed.

The WWDA Submission to the Model Domestic Violence Laws Discussion Paper was forwarded to the Attorney General's Department for consideration. Copies of WWDA's reports on the Model Action Plan Process were sent as attachments to the WWDA submission. A copy of WWDA's submission is included with this report.

Department of Health and Family Services -Submission to the Development of the National Strategy for Ageing

WWDA was invited by the Minister for Family Services to participate in the consultation process being undertaken on the development of the National Strategy for Ageing Australia. A submission was developed by WWDA and submitted to the Minister for consideration. (A copy of the submission is included with this report).

Department of Health and Family Services – Improving Access to Employment Assistance for People with a Disability

WWDA has participated in the consultation process being conducted by the Department of Health and Family Services on improving access to employment assistance for people with a disability. A Focus Group of women with disabilities is being held on April 18 to discuss the issues and develop a response to the Discussion Paper which was released by the Department of Health and Family Services.

NSW Department of Ageing and Disability – Consultation Meeting

WWDA recently had input into a consultation process being conducted by the NSW Department of Ageing and Disability. The consultation was aiming to find out if gay, lesbian, and transgender people with disabilities (as well as those living with HIV/AIDS) have experienced discrimination when accessing services funded by the Aged and Disability Department. A WWDA representative from NSW attended the meeting which was held at the Anti-Discrimination Board in Redfern on March 18.

Goal 4: To continue to establish and support WWDA state bodies and groups around the country.

The State and Territory WWDA groups continue to develop – some groups are stronger and more active than others and this reflects their varying stages of development. In general, the main issues for the groups at this stage appear to be:

- expanding the membership of the groups;
- developing group processes such as: managing a committee; conducting meetings etc;
- working towards becoming incorporated bodies;
- securing funding to implement projects and activities and also to assist in the development of the groups.

South Australia

The South Australia WWDA group has recently appointed a new convenor – Chandra Sluggett. Chandra brings a wealth of experience to the South Australian group and the National Executive

Committee. Chandra is from a non-English speaking background, and has very strong links with indigenous communities in South Australia. The appointment of Chandra as Convenor will give WWDA invaluable opportunities to begin to research and address the needs of women from non-English speaking backgrounds and indigenous women with disabilities. Some of the current activities of the SA WWDA group include:

- organising of a meeting with South Australian Domestic Violence Services to provide information about women with disabilities and violence.
- attending meetings of Indigenous and NESB (non English speaking) bodies to assist them in developing strategies to address disability issues in their community.
- setting up a Resource Library in conjunction with DIRC (disability information resource centre) on issues for women with disabilities, including race, cultural and religious issues.

New South Wales

The NSW WWDA Group is well established and has good links with organisations and government agencies in NSW. Some of the recent activities of the NSW Group include:

- hosting an Information Stall at the International Women's Day event;
- participating in Round Table meetings with Minister Judi Moylan;
- Participating in consultations of the NSW Ageing and Disability Department;
- beginning the development of a proposal to conduct a Leadership Forum for women with disabilities in NSW;

Newcastle

The Newcastle WWDA Group is growing in numbers and strength. The group meets on a monthly basis with, on average, around 45 women attending the meetings. The group has produced its own newsletter (a copy is included with this report), and is very active in the local community. The group receives good support from Disability organisations in Newcastle. The group is currently developing a funding proposal to BHP for a program of workshops. The WWDA National Office is assisting the group with the proposal and is also working with the group to look at working towards incorporation.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Group is a relatively small group but it is very active and is working hard to broaden its membership. Some of the current activities include:

- participating in government consultations around employment of people with disabilities by conducting a focus group;
- applying to the ACT Women's Consultative Council for a member of WWDA ACT to be represented on the Council;
- conducting a program of workshops for women with disabilities in the ACT (the group was successful in securing a small grant from ACT Healthpact for the workshops);

Tasmania

The Tasmanian WWDA Group was launched on International Women's Day in 1997. It is currently concentrating its energies on 2 priority areas: health issues for women with disabilities, and oral histories of women with disabilities in Tasmania. The group has begun work on running workshops around the theme of 'Women With Disabilities Looking After Their Health'. These workshops are to be run in conjunction with the Tasmanian Cancer Screening and Prevention Unit and Family Planning Tasmania.

Queensland

There are two WWDA networks in Queensland – one in Brisbane and one in Townsville. The group in Townsville meets often and is called ‘Venus’. The Brisbane network has been involved in looking at issues around environmental disability – including working with women who have been exposed to asbestos. The network has also been working with the Queensland based Disabled People’s International on issues around telecommunications.

Northern Territory

WWDA has a representative in the Northern Territory who has well developed working links with local disability organisations and also government and non-government agencies. The WWDA network in the Northern Territory has been involved in working with organisations to improve access to public buildings for people with disabilities.

Western Australia

The WWDA group in Western Australia is well established and meets on a regular basis. The Convenor of the Western Australian Group has started to meet regularly with Convenors of the WWDA groups in the other remote areas, including: Northern Territory and Townsville.

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

Over the last few months, WWDA’s profile has increased significantly. This is reflected in the amount and diversity of phone calls, faxes, correspondence and e-mails coming into the organisation. WWDA receives a large number of requests for information – these requests come from individual women with a disability; from organisations; from government agencies; from voluntary groups; from the private sector and also from people studying at schools, colleges and universities. Some of the work WWDA has done in relation to increasing its membership and public profile have been outlined in this section.

Disabled Women’s Network Canada

WWDA has established good links with the Disabled Women’s Network (DAWN) in Canada. We liaise with DAWN regularly by e-mail. WWDA recently wrote an article for the DAWN newsletter – it provided general information about WWDA as well as information on programs and current activities. DAWN and WWDA have worked collaboratively to develop an annotated bibliography of international resources on women with disabilities and violence. This annotated bibliography has been included in the WWDA Women with Disabilities and Violence Information Kit which was developed earlier this year. WWDA has sent various reports and information to DAWN for their library and promotion. Recently, WWDA sent the Model Plan Process Reports to DAWN as well as a copy of the WWDA Women with Disabilities and Violence Information Kit.

Global Overview of Violence Programs

WWDA was recently contacted via e-mail by an organisation in Washington, USA. This organisation is developing a new publication which will provide a global overview on programs addressing violence against women. WWDA provided information for this publication on initiatives and programs conducted by WWDA dealing with the issue of violence against women with disabilities. A copy of the WWDA paper has been attached to this report.

Global Applied Disability Research and Information Network (Gladnet)

WWDA has established links via e-mail with GLADNET, the Global Applied Disability Research and

Information Network. This network is an initiative of the Vocational Rehabilitation Branch of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a specialised agency of the United Nations, with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The network brings together research centers, universities, enterprises, government departments, trade unions, and organisations representing disabled persons, all committed to the common goal of advancing competitive employment and training opportunities for persons with disabilities. The ultimate objective of the Association, and its over 100 member organisations, is the promotion of disability policy and programme reform favouring integrated training and employment options for working age disabled persons. It works to achieve this objective through collaborative applied research projects, and by the global exchange of information via the Internet.

Conference Presentations

WWDA has presented papers at 2 National Conferences this year. Both presentations have been done by women with disabilities who are members of WWDA. Ms Aileen McFadzen, a lawyer from Melbourne, presented a paper on 'Workplace Diversity and EEO Programs' at the Merit Protection Commission Conference, which was held in Canberra in February. A copy of Aileen's paper is included with this report.

Ms Karen Swift, of Queensland, presented a paper entitled 'The Impact of Disability on Gender' at the National Communication Aid User Society Conference, which was held in Brisbane in early April. Karen's presentation included the use of slides and the showing of a video about women with disabilities. A copy of Karen's paper has been included with this report.

As well as presenting papers at these conferences, WWDA provided the presenters with promotional material about WWDA to distribute at the Conferences. Several delegates took the opportunity to become members of WWDA following the Conferences.

WWDA Newsletter

The latest edition of the WWDA newsletter was posted out late March. The focus of the newsletter was on International Forums WWDA had been to, as well as information about WWDA's activities in relation to violence against women with disabilities. The WWDA office has received several phone calls from women following the distribution of the newsletter – these women have rung to congratulate WWDA on providing information about violence against women with disabilities. Several of the women who have phoned have disclosed that they are in violent relationships and have said that until they read the newsletter article, they thought they 'were the only ones'. Several callers have requested more information about violence against women with disabilities.

Network Exchange of Women's Services

WWDA has written an article about the organisation and its activities for inclusion into the first edition of the Network Exchange of Women's Services Newsletter (NEWS). This newsletter is a new initiative of an organisation called 'Families at Work'. The initiative is funded by the Office of the Status of Women and has been set up to exchange information between women's organisations and groups in Australia.

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

WWDA moved into a larger office space in January. We have been fortunate to acquire some additional furniture through donations, which were badly needed by the organisation. Work is currently being undertaken to develop systems to support the work of the organisation. Some of this work includes:

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

WWDA is also currently developing a database of grants programs and funding sources (see under Goal 2 for more information).

Some background research work has been undertaken to assist WWDA in the development of operational and organisational policies. The research to date has included:

- extensive issue based literature searches (utilising CD Roms at the Department of Health and Family Services Library);
- background reading on a wide range of issues;
- extensive issue based Internet search – including the World Wide Web, e-mail, Listservs and discussion groups;
- researching examples of operational policies of other similar organisations.

A Kit is currently being produced on 'Disability and Gender' for use by the organisation. The acting Executive Director (Carolyn Frohmader) is doing this work in her own time as part of the final requirements for her Masters Degree at Flinders University of South Australia.