



Women  
With  
Disabilities  
Australia  
(WWDA)

# Strategic Plan 2004 – 2009

A Summary

MAY 2004



Winner Australian Human Rights Award 2001  
Winner National Violence Prevention Award 1999  
Nominee, French Republics Human Rights Prize 2003  
Nominee, UN Millennium Peace Prize for Women 2000

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# Introducing Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)



Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia. WWDA is a national voice for the needs and rights of women with disabilities and a national force to improve the lives and life chances of women with disabilities. WWDA was established in 1994, and became incorporated in 1995 although it had been operating as an unfunded network within another organisation for eight years previous to that. 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. The national secretariat is located in Tasmania. 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.

Women With Disabilities Australia (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. WWDA seeks to ensure the advancement of education of society to the status and needs of women with disabilities in order to promote equity, reduce suffering, poverty, discrimination and exploitation of women with disabilities. WWDA is unique, in that it operates as a national disability organisation; a national women's organisation; and a national human rights organisation.

WWDA is managed by a National Management Committee, which is made up of women with disabilities and which is elected each year at the Annual General Meeting. The members of WWDA are actively involved in the decision making processes of the organisation. All programs and activities conducted by WWDA are in direct response to the identified issues and concerns of women with disabilities in Australia. WWDA is a registered charitable organisation with Public Benevolent Institution status which means that donations made to the organisation over \$2 are tax deductible.

There are two classes of membership of WWDA: (a) full membership; and (b) associate membership. Full membership is open to women with a disability who are resident in Australia. Associate membership is open to individuals and organisations who are supportive of the aim and objectives of the Association.

More information about WWDA can be found at the organisation's extensive website, located at [www.wwda.org.au](http://www.wwda.org.au)

# Summary

This Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 has been developed following extensive consultation with our members, associate organisations, and other stakeholders. It reflects our commitment to promoting leadership opportunities for women with disabilities, and to fostering the empowerment and participation of all women with disabilities. This Strategic Plan is based on the social model of disability, which identifies the barriers and restrictions facing women with disabilities as the focus of reform.

WWDA's Strategic Plan 2004-2009 will see our organisation further develop our role as the national representative organisation for women with disabilities in Australia. We will continue to develop innovative programs that are centered on the needs identified by women with disabilities. We will stimulate debate, promote research, policy and program development, and advocate for legislative change in the policy priority areas identified by our members. We will actively seek out opportunities for systemic advocacy on issues affecting women with disabilities. We will continue to develop strategic alliances and collaborative partnerships with organisations in order to achieve our objectives. We will maintain our work with mainstream organisations in ways that assist them to re-orient their services to better meet the needs of women with disabilities.

WWDA's Strategic Plan 2004-2009 will see us undertaking specific research and policy work in areas identified by our members as a priority. We are a national organisation, but we work with emerging groups of women across the globe, particularly those in developing countries. We recognise our role as a leading voice in international disability, women's and human rights debates, and we commit to increasing our capacity to better support our sisters in developing countries. We will continue to enhance and promote communication to our members and potential members, and will seek out opportunities to extend the reach of our organisation by connecting with women with disabilities at regional, rural and local levels. Importantly, we will foster opportunities for women with disabilities to become actively involved in WWDA.

WWDA will continue to contribute to Government policies affecting women with disabilities and will provide advice to Government on policy, program and service delivery issues emerging from our membership. We will advise Government on the impact of social policy initiatives and will suggest new strategies, models or changes as appropriate.

Our Strategic Plan 2004-2009 will see us further develop the infrastructure of our organisation. We will undertake capacity building initiatives needed to support the growth and changing needs of WWDA. We recognise the need to ensure the ongoing financial viability of our organisation, including the need to diversify our funding base and secure operational funding that is commensurate with our role, our work, and our achievements.

# The Vision

Our vision is to improve the lives and life chances of women with disabilities. Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) will achieve its vision by:

- actively promoting the participation of women with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life;
- advocating on issues of concern to women with disabilities in Australia; and
- seeking to be the national representative organisation for women with disabilities in Australia by: undertaking systemic advocacy; providing policy advice; undertaking research; and providing support, information and education.

# The Principles

Underpinning this Strategic Plan, and implicit in WWDA's Strategic direction, is a focus on, and commitment to promoting leadership opportunities for women with disabilities, and fostering the empowerment and participation of women with disabilities.

Leadership for women with disabilities focuses on women and encourages social change, promoting the role of sharing resources, information and power. WWDA ascribes to a feminist model of leadership. The difference between the traditional forms of leadership and feminist leadership is that feminist leadership works to develop 'power for' the group instead of 'power over' or 'domination' of the group. Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) embraces this style of leadership because it is centered on the needs of women; it acknowledges and reflects the diversity of each woman's needs; it allows each woman to take control of her life with the help and respect of the other women in her group; and allows her to have her say in an environment where she knows she will be listened to. It is essential that women with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to learn leadership skills so they can represent the views of women with disabilities and also pass on those skills to other women.

Empowerment involves women with disabilities understanding their right to be citizens and being given the tools for equality and participation. It is achieved mainly by women with disabilities coming together to share their experiences, to gain strength from one another and to provide positive role models. It means breaking away from an identity of graceful passivity and finding the will and power to change one's own circumstances. This is not an easy process for women with disabilities or the wider community. However, it is an essential component in the struggle for full participation and equality of opportunity.

# The Model

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) addresses disability within a social model, which identifies the barriers and restrictions facing women with disabilities as the focus for reform.

The Social Model of Disability understands disability as a problem created and imposed by society. It recognises that it is not the impairments of people with disabilities which cause 'the problem', but rather the way in which society fails to make allowances for differences. The Social Model takes the view that disability is the outcome of society's failure to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. The Social Model focuses on the barriers people with disabilities face on a daily basis. It establishes that everyone is equal and demonstrates that it is society which erects barriers that prevent people with disabilities participating and restricts their opportunities. The social model empowers people with disabilities to challenge society to remove those barriers.

# The Progress

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) will be reporting, in its Annual Report, the achievements arising from the strategies included in this Strategic Plan. An evaluation of the Strategic Plan will be undertaken every year as part of WWDA's internal review processes.

# Summary of Goals & Key Objectives

WWDA's Strategic Plan 2004-2009 contains five main goals, each supported by a Goal Statement. Under each goal are listed key objectives which set out how we intend to achieve our goals. Each key objective is supported by a number of Strategies, which describe how each objective will be achieved, as well as by a series of Performance Indicators which will help us monitor progress.

Our Goals and Key Objectives are summarised below. A copy of the full WWDA Strategic Plan 2004-2009 can be obtained by contacting the National WWDA Office.

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## GOAL I

**Promote and protect the rights of women with disabilities internationally, nationally and locally.**

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As the national representative organisation for women with disabilities in Australia, WWDA will continue to strive for excellence and best practice. This will be achieved through the initiation and undertaking of innovative work centered on the needs identified by women with disabilities, actively promoting the participation of women with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

### Key Objectives at the international level

- Increase WWDA's capacity to support women with disabilities in developing countries.
- Contribute to relevant international initiatives relating to women with disabilities.
- Increase WWDA's profile at the international level.
- Maintain and further develop WWDA's website as a model of best practice in content and design.

### Key Objectives at the national level

- Promote WWDA as the national representative organisation for women with disabilities in Australia.
- Continue to consult with women with disabilities on systemic advocacy issues.
- Promote the interests and concerns of women with disabilities through representation on relevant committees, advisory bodies and other relevant fora.
- Promote the interests and concerns of women with disabilities in the development of relevant Government policies, particularly women's policy.
- Contribute to relevant national initiatives relating to women with disabilities.

### Key Objectives at the local level

- Extend the reach of WWDA by identifying and linking to women with disabilities, at State/Territory, regional and local levels.
- Enhance and promote membership services and communication to WWDA members and potential members.
- Promote opportunities for WWDA members to become actively involved in the organisation.
- Increase WWDA's profile at the State/Territory, regional and local levels.



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## GOAL 2

**Undertake systemic advocacy in specific areas of concern to WWDA members, focusing on women with disabilities at risk.**

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WWDA will endeavour through systemic advocacy to improve the status of women with disabilities who are identified as at particular risk; including those women who face multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination as a result of race, ethnicity, sexuality, or other status.

### Key Objectives

- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Violence against women with disabilities, including unlawful sterilisation.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Health, with particular focus on cervical screening; breast screening; and screening for Osteoporosis.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Housing and Accommodation.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Disability Support.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Employment and Income Support.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Information & Communication Technologies.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Education.
- Undertake work in the policy priority area of Women With Disabilities At Risk.
- Develop networks which support the WWDA priority areas.

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## GOAL 3

**Contribute to the development and implementation of Commonwealth Government social policies affecting women with disabilities.**

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As a national peak body receiving operational funding from the Commonwealth Government, WWDA will continue to contribute to Government policies affecting women with disabilities, carry information between the Government and the community on social policy issues, and represent constituents' views.

### Key Objectives

- Undertake activities as required in WWDA's funding contract with the Department of Family & Community Services (FaCS).
- Act as a two way conduit between the Government and the community on social policy issues as they affect women with disabilities.

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## GOAL 4

**Ensure the ongoing viability of WWDA to independently advocate on behalf of women with disabilities.**

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As the national representative organisation for women with disabilities in Australia, WWDA undertakes a wide range of work which contributes to meeting its overall mission. Whilst the organisation receives operational funding from the Department of Family & Community Services (FaCS), both parties recognise the need to respect each others priorities and interests. WWDA will continue to undertake work which is centered on the needs identified by women with disabilities.

### Key Objectives

- Undertake systemic advocacy in WWDA's policy priority areas, and in new areas that emerge from the WWDA membership.
- Provide policy advice to Government and other key stakeholders on issues affecting women with disabilities.
- Undertake research falling within WWDA's policy priority areas.
- Provide support, information and education.
- Seek revenue from a variety of public and private sources to improve the viability of the organisation and diversify the financial base.

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## GOAL 5

**Further develop the infrastructure of the organisation so as to best serve WWDA's membership and its aims and objectives.**

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WWDA will continue to develop and improve its organisation policies and procedures, and undertake capacity building initiatives to reflect the growth and changing needs of the organisation. Inherent in this, is the need for WWDA to endeavour to diversify its funding and resources.

### Key Objectives

- Ensure the ongoing financial viability of WWDA.
- Undertake capacity building initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of WWDA.
- Undertake strategic planning, organisational review and evaluation processes.
- Develop information management systems which increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.



