



WWDA NEWS

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WWDA Executive Director recognised for services to human rights	2
Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry	3
WWDA Submission to the National Women's Health Policy Framework	4
WWDA's Input to the Beijing+15 Review	6
Australian Government PDF Accessibility Review	7
Violence Prevention Update	8
Help build a new vision for Queenslanders with disability	11
WWDA Submission to the Government's Initial Report under CRPD	12
CEDAW NGO Shadow Report	13
Feature Article: Disabled Women in Kenya are Vulnerable to Sexual Violence	14
Captioned Telephony - web captioned telephony trial	16
Women with disabilities need Pap Smears too!	17
Sterilisation of minors falls off the Government's agenda	18
Draft National Primary Health Care Strategy released for consultation	20
Government releases National Preventative Health Strategy	21
The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman	21
Women With Disabilities Western Australia (WWDDWA)	22
Resources – Books, Reports, Websites, Lists	23
News Wanted for WWDA-News!	27
Notice of WWDA AGM	27
Join WWDA!	27

WWDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOGNISED FOR SERVICES TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Readers of this newsletter and people who follow the work of WWDA will know that a human rights framework underpins all of WWDA's actions. This focus is due largely to the efforts and commitment of WWDA's Executive Director, Carolyn Frohmader.

Her work is well known at a local, national and international level, and in August this year was recognised by the Government of Tasmania. WWDA Management Committee, staff and colleagues congratulate Carolyn for her induction to the *Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women* for her services to human rights.

Carolyn commenced work with WWDA in 1997 just 2 years after its formation and when its head office was located in Canberra. From the start she played a pivotal leadership role in shaping the organisation. In the citation for her award, referee Graeme Innes AM, Australian Commissioner for Human Rights and its Disability Discrimination Commissioner, acknowledged that WWDA's place as one of the leading disability advocacy organisations in Australia is largely due to Carolyn's work. In fact, her convictions about improving the low status of women with disabilities are just part of a wider concern for social justice and equity.

Born and educated in Hobart, Carolyn went on to complete a Masters Degree from Flinders University where she won the inaugural Michael Crotty Award for an outstanding contribution in Primary Health Care. While working in health care, she built a reputation for identifying the lack of services for women, and of creating opportunities for the women themselves

to advocate for appropriate remedies. This talent has led Carolyn to also give a voice to women with disabilities both Australia-wide and beyond. Her strategic thinking has taken the concerns of WWDA to the United Nations, and in turn has helped WWDA Management Committee and members to use human rights processes as a tool for bringing about change. At an individual level Carolyn has helped many women with disabilities find their voices, and take on leadership roles within the organisation. In 2001, Carolyn received the ACT Woman of the Year Award in recognition of her contribution to the promotion of women's rights in the ACT.

With Carolyn's help, WWDA has been awarded the National Violence Prevention Award (1999), National Human Rights Award (2001), Certificate of Merit, Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards (2008) and the Women's Safety Award, Tasmanian Crime Prevention and Community Safety Awards (2008). WWDA was also a nominee for the French Republic's Human Rights Prize (2003) and for the UN Millennium Peace Prize for Women (2000).

Carolyn's inauguration to the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women created something of a record because the name Frohmader was already on the roll. In 2008, her mother Wendy was posthumously awarded the honour for her services to education and training. Wendy's life was one of commitment to family, friends, community and her profession. She too had a strong sense of social justice, and in her 30-year



dedication to teaching she particularly focused on the welfare of 'at risk' girls, and on the creation of a nurturing networked community. This role modeling over two generations will no doubt continue with Carolyn's daughter Lottie who has taken part in both inauguration ceremonies.

WWDA thanks Carolyn for her inspiring contribution to all its undertakings, and congratulates her on this well deserved recognition of her knowledge of and commitment to human rights. We look forward to consolidating this work and in partnership with her, achieving positive changes in the lives of all women with disabilities.

Further information about the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women can be found at:

http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/cdd/women/leadership/tasmanian_honour_roll_of_women.

By Sue Salthouse

WWDA Vice President

NEW UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Rashida Manjoo (pictured right) was appointed as the new UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, on 18 June 2009.

Ms. Manjoo is a longtime women's rights activist from South Africa who previously served as an Advocate of the High Court of South Africa and as a member of the South African Commission on Gender Equality.

"Violence against women violates human dignity as well as numerous rights, including the right to equality, physical integrity, freedom and non-discrimination" said Ms. Manjoo, who was appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council for an initial period of three years at the 11th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2009.

"I believe that equality and equal protection doctrines demand that we address violence against women, in all its manifestations, as discrimination against women. It is my hope to work within this framework during my mandate," she stressed.

She replaces Ms. Yakin Ertürk who was the mandate holder from 2004 to 2009.



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Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia. It is a not-for-profit organisation constituted and driven by women with disabilities. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australia and one of only a very small number internationally. WWDA is inclusive and does not discriminate against any disability.

WWDA is unique, in that it operates as a national disability organisation; a national women's organisation; and a national human rights organisation (more information about WWDA can be found at the organisation's extensive website: www.wwda.org.au).

If you have any questions, or would like more information on anything in this document, please email Carolyn or Shirley at: wwda@wwda.org.au.

Previous Newsletters are available on the WWDA website at: www.wwda.org.au/bulletin.htm

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION INQUIRY

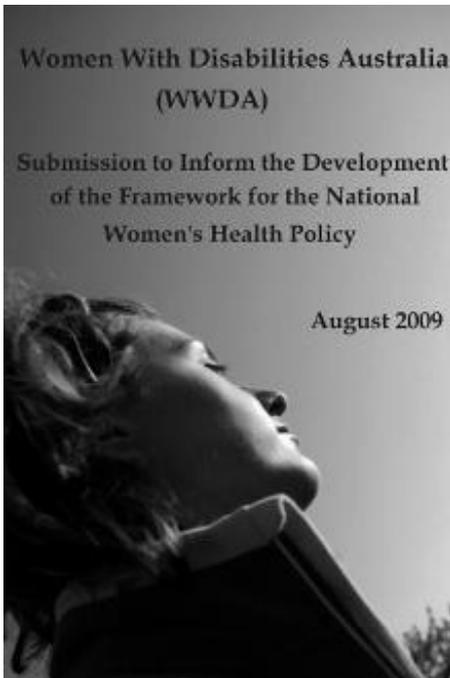
The Joint Standing Committee on Migration has launched an inquiry into the migration treatment of disability. According to Committee Chair Michael Danby, *"Potential migrants with disabilities and their families are currently treated under the migration system as costs to our society, and there is little scope to take into account the contributions they might make to their community and workplace."*

The Committee will examine whether visa decision-makers should be able to take into account the social and economic

contribution, as well as the anticipated health care costs, of potential migrants with disabilities.

For more information and the Inquiry terms of reference, go to: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/disability/index.htm or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or jscm@aph.gov.au

Submissions to the Inquiry close on October 28, 2009.



WWDA SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

In the lead up to the Federal election in late 2007, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) articulated its intention to 'develop a national policy on women's health that will encourage specific health services for women and will actively promote participation of women in health decision making and management' (ALP National Platform and Constitution 2007). In early 2009, the Rudd Labor Government commenced the task of developing its new National Women's Health Policy (NWHP).

It convened a National Roundtable Consultation which was attended by 14 'invited only' key stakeholder organisations. Women with disabilities were neither invited to, nor represented at this National Roundtable Consultation, despite the Australian Government identifying women with disabilities as a group experiencing major inequalities in health status, and further identifying the critical importance of the participation of socially excluded groups of women in health as a 'key way of making the health system more responsive to their needs' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

At the National Roundtable Consultation on March 12, the Australian Government publicly launched the NWHP Consultation Discussion Paper, which stated that the purpose of the NWHP will be to: *improve the health and wellbeing of all women in Australia, especially those with the highest risk of poor health; encourage the health system to be more responsive to the needs of women;*

actively promote the participation of women in health decision making and management; and to promote health equity among women (Roxon 2009).

Key stakeholder organisations and other interested parties were invited to provide written Submissions to the Consultation Paper, which would be used to inform the development of the Framework for the NWHP. The Consultation Paper was not provided in accessible formats, and repeated requests to the Government for an accessible version of the Paper were initially refused. This action clearly contravened CRPD (Article 9) which articulates the need for States to ensure that information is accessible to all people with disabilities on an equal basis with others. It took almost three months of lobbying by WWDA, supported by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), before an accessible version was provided. WWDA's capacity to contribute to the consultation process was therefore significantly hampered due to the shortened timeframe to develop a response (WWDA has not been alone in lobbying about the lack of provision of information in accessible formats. A review of government policy about using PDFs for online information is currently under way. More information about the review is included in this Newsletter).

As a result of these difficulties, WWDA was able to successfully negotiate for a small funding grant from the Australian



Department of Health and Ageing to assist with the preparation of WWDA's Submission to the NWHP Consultation Discussion Paper:

WWDA's Submission was completed in August 2009. It is based and draws on, the lived experiences of women with disabilities in relation to their health, and is supported by international and national literature (both published and unpublished) relevant to the field. WWDA members informed the development of the Submission by providing their views, their experiences and in many cases, their candid personal stories. The funding secured by WWDA to assist in the preparation of the Submission, enabled us to host a *Women with Disabilities and Health Forum* in Queensland. This Forum was conducted in partnership with the Queenslanders with Disabilities Network (QDN), and facilitated on behalf of WWDA by WWDA member Karin Swift.

WWDA's Submission focuses predominantly on the Framework for the new NWHP, in the context of human rights and women with disabilities. It examines what is meant by the 'right to health' and looks at women with disabilities' right to health under the relevant international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party. Giving consideration to Australia's obligation to women with disabilities under these core human rights treaties, WWDA's Submission highlights that successive governments have failed in their obligations

to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women with disabilities, and in so doing, have denied disabled women the freedoms and the entitlements for health..

The Principles to underpin the new NWHP are addressed and the inequities experienced by women with disabilities in claiming their right to health are examined. Examples are given to illustrate these inequities in the areas of: the right to freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse; the right to bodily integrity; the right to found a family and to reproductive freedom; the right to health facilities, goods and services; the right to work; and, the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. The final section of WWDA's Submission looks at priorities for the new NWHP and identifies (and provides rationale for) both priority groups and priority thematic issues that should be included in the new NWHP.

WWDA's *Submission to Inform the Development of the Framework for the National Women's Health Policy* can be downloaded in either PDF or Word format from WWDA's website.

Go to: www.wwda.org.au/subs2006.htm Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, please contact wwda@wwda.org.au

Over the coming months, the Australian Government is conducting nationwide consultations on the Draft National Women's Health Policy. For more information, go to: <http://www.health.gov.au/womenshealthpolicy>

Women with disabilities participating in the joint
WWDA/QDN Forum



WWDA'S INPUT TO THE BEIJING+15 REVIEW

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)



Submission to the Australian NGO Beijing+15 Review

In March 2010, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will undertake the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA)*.

A significant part of this Beijing+15 review will be the sharing of information between the delegations from both government and non-government organizations (NGOs) about improvements in the status of women since BPFA and good practices for implementing change. There will be differences of approach between countries in their preparation for Beijing+15 review, but the emphasis should be on presenting a comprehensive picture of the actions undertaken in the past 15 years to improve the lived experience of all women in each of the member nations.

It is important that the voices of women with disabilities are heard in this process. So often input from this sector of the population is not sought or heeded, so that issues for women with disabilities continue to be overlooked.

However, any grouping of women with disabilities with a reasonably formed contact network can assemble a report which gives a snap-shot of the situation for women with disabilities in a particular country or region. The collected information does not have to form a separate report, but can feed into an official country report as well as to the Shadow Report of an NGO.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) has begun using its networks to gather information which will be collated into a report for inclusion in both the Australian Government report to CSW and into any NGO Shadow Reports which will be submitted in parallel. WWDA is calling on all women with disabilities to have input to this important review process. It is critical that women with disabilities in Australia have

their say on what issues they are currently facing in their lives and what they think should be done to improve their lives.

WHAT IS BEIJING+15?

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, China by the United Nations. At that conference, all the governments of all nations attending agreed to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).

The BPFA was a landmark agreement. It identified a range of actions governments, the United Nations and civil society groups should take to make women's human rights a reality. This included actions on poverty, education, health, women being politically active, government institutions, young girls, the economy, violence, women's rights, media, the environment and armed conflict.

Women's groups had a strong presence and influence at these meetings, and so the Platform is very strong in recognising women's human rights. In 2000, the governments and the UN reviewed how many of these actions had been put in place in five years. This review was known as Beijing+5. In 2005, the Beijing+10 review was undertaken to monitor the progress of Governments and the UN in commitments to and implementation of the BPFA over a decade.

In 2010, Governments and the UN will review how many of these actions have been put in place in 15 years, and identify the new and emerging areas of concern.

HOW WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN AUSTRALIA ARE HAVING INPUT TO BEIJING+15

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is contributing to the Beijing+15 process in a number of ways:

WWDA is **supporting** individual women with disabilities to attend Australian regional and local Beijing+15 consultation meetings.

WWDA is **consulting** directly with women with disabilities from around Australia seeking their views, comments, case studies and stories on **any** of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as asking for information on any emerging issues which are not covered in these areas. The 12 areas are:

1. Poverty
2. Women Decision Makers
3. Education and Training
4. Government Institutions
5. Health
6. Women's Rights
7. Violence
8. Media
9. Armed Conflict / Refugees
10. Environment
11. Economy
12. Young Girls

WWDA will then collate the information received from women with disabilities for inclusion into the national response which will be taken to the regional and international meetings for the fifteen year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

WWDA is **providing** relevant WWDA reports and policy submissions for consideration and reference in the development of the national response to the Beijing+15 Review.

In addition, consultations have been conducted by Justice, Equality, Rights, Access International (JERA International) to inform the shadow report from Australia. WWDA members Karin Swift, Sue Salthouse and Margie Charlesworth have represented WWDA in the consultations in Brisbane, Canberra and Adelaide respectively. JERA International has prepared an information kit about the Beijing+15 consultations. The Kit entitled *Working Together for Equality: Beijing +15 Information Package* is available in PDF version from WWDA – contact wwda@wwda.org.au

For an accessible version of this document contact Carole Shaw at info@jerainternational.org

For more information on Beijing+15, go to: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html>

For more information on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) go to:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijingplatform>

WWDA's *Submission to the Australian NGO Beijing+15 Review* can be downloaded in either PDF or Word from WWDA's website. Go to: www.wwda.org.au/subs2006.htm

Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, please contact wwda@wwda.org.au

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PDF ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) regards failure to provide a document in accessible format as a possible cause for a complaint under the Disability Discrimination Act. The Australian Government is seeking input on its policy about the use of Portable Document Format (PDF) for the provision of government information online. The Review seeks feedback about the accessibility and ease of use of PDF files on the internet, especially via assistive technologies such as Screen Reader Programs like JAWS. The government office which oversees web standards is the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO). AGIMO is administering this review in conjunction with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The Review was launched on 16 September and will close on 19 October – so responses from people who use assistive technologies are urgently needed.

Further information and the consultation questions are available on the website at:

http://webpublishing.agimo.gov.au/PDF_Accessibility_Review

Your comments can be given by email, by mail or by phone.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION - UPDATE



WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES SECURE REPRESENTATION ON THE NEW NATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ADVISORY GROUP

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is thrilled with the news that women with disabilities will be represented on the new National Violence Against Women Advisory Group. The membership of the new Advisory Group was announced by the Prime Minister in mid September.

WWDA President, Annie Parkinson (pictured above), will be representing women with disabilities on the new Group. This is a major achievement for WWDA and an outstanding result of our sustained conviction that women with disabilities should be represented on such a critical structure.

Many of you will remember that the original National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women, established by the Australian Government in early 2008, did not include women with disabilities. Since that time, WWDA has actively lobbied for the representation and inclusion of women with disabilities on any national violence prevention advisory structures. WWDA received widespread support for our position, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have assisted us in our lobbying and advocacy efforts.

WWDA is delighted that our President, Annie Parkinson, will be representing women with disabilities on the new National Violence Against Women Advisory Group. Annie has wide ranging experience in issues of social justice and violence against women. Her presence and work on the new Council will not only raise awareness of the issues facing women with disabilities, but will also lead to improved outcomes for women with disabilities who experience, and are at risk of experiencing, violence.

A copy of the Hon Tanya Plibersek (Minister for the Status of Women) Press Release announcing the membership and tasks of the new National Violence Against Women Advisory Group, is included below.

"The Australian Government today (10 Sept 2009) announced the members of the new Violence against Women Advisory Group. The Prime Minister announced at the White Tie Dinner in Sydney that the new Advisory Group will be chaired by Libby Lloyd AM. The other ten members of the Council are: Georgie Gardner, Annie Parkinson, Bess Price, Mick van Heythuysen OAM, Heather Nancarrow, Vanessa Swan, Norman Raeburn, Dr Leigh Gassner, Dr Rae Kaspiw and Victoria Hovane.

The Government is providing national leadership in reducing domestic violence and sexual assault through the development of a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women. The Plan is being developed through the Council of Australian Governments and will be released in 2010. The role of the Advisory Group will be to provide the Australian Government with expert advice on the implementation of National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women initiatives. The Advisory Group will also provide advice on issues and recommendations raised in Time for Action: the National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021, including immediate actions the Government is already implementing.

Advisory Group members have been drawn from diverse professional and personal backgrounds, which will enable them to provide expert advice and direction to

assist the Government. The Violence against Women Advisory Group has been appointed for a period of two years. Upcoming priorities include:

- Establishing a new high quality national domestic violence and sexual assault telephone and online crisis and support service.
- Implementing Respectful Relationships programs into school and non school settings to change attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence.
- Working with the States and Territories to establish a National Centre of Excellence in the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

The Prime Minister also announced the opening of the second round of applications for the Respectful Relationships Program, to introduce respectful relationships education into high schools across Australia. \$1.1 million will be invested in this round, as part of a total \$9.1 million investment in this program.

An additional 2,000 young people are expected to be educated through this round - bringing the total to 8,000 throughout the duration of the program. Respectful Relationships is a primary prevention strategy that seeks to prevent sexual assault and domestic and family violence through education. Round 1 of the Respectful Relationships Program is currently being implemented in 56 school and non-school sites across Australia this year."

NEW JOURNAL ARTICLES: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

'Development of an Accessible Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview (A-CASI) to Screen for Abuse and Provide Safety Strategies for Women With Disabilities'

To increase safety and minimise the risk of interpersonal violence, it is critical that women with disabilities and Deaf women have an opportunity to identify whether or not abuse is happening in their lives. Awareness and knowledge of what constitutes abusive behaviours is an essential first step in addressing interpersonal violence. This article includes a description of the development and evaluation of the Safer and Stronger Program (SSP), an audio computer-assisted self-interview program, which was created for women with disabilities and Deaf women for the purposes of increasing awareness of abuse, encouraging safety-planning behaviours, and providing information about community resources.

Full Reference: Oswald, M., Renker, P., Hughes, R., Arthur, A., Powers, L. & Curry, M. (2009) 'Development of an Accessible Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview (A-CASI) to Screen for Abuse and Provide Safety Strategies for Women With Disabilities'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 795-818.

'Interpersonal violence and women with disabilities: analysis of safety promoting behaviors'

Very little information exists related to the interpersonal violence safety promoting behaviours of women with disabilities. Information about women's use of safety promoting behaviours was gathered from 305 disabled and Deaf/hearing impaired women who completed an anonymous Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview. Exploratory factor analyses revealed factors related to seeking abuse-related

safety information, building abuse-related safety promoting skills, using relationship support, planning for emergencies, taking legal action, and managing safety in personal assistance relationships. Four of these factors demonstrated significant relationships to women's experience of different forms of abuse and their perpetrator's characteristics.

Full Reference: Powers L., Renker P., Robinson-Whelen, S., Oswald M., Hughes R., Swank, P. & Curry M. (2009) 'Interpersonal violence and women with disabilities: analysis of safety promoting behaviors'. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 15, No. 9, pp. 1040-1069.

'Development of Measures of Abuse Among Women With Disabilities and the Characteristics of Their Perpetrators'

Three hundred and five women with diverse disabilities completed an anonymous audio computer—assisted self-interview designed to increase women's awareness of abuse. Data were also collected regarding abuse experienced in the past year and the risk characteristics of their perpetrators. Overall, 68% reported some type of abuse. Preliminary evidence for the validity and reliability of questions to assess abuse and perpetrator risk characteristics was found. Latent class analysis revealed four distinct classes of abuse experiences: sexual abuse, physical abuse, multiple forms of abuse, and minimal abuse and three classes of perpetrator risk characteristics: controlling characteristics, non-controlling characteristics, and minimal risk characteristics.

Full Reference: Curry, M., Renker, P., Hughes, R., Robinson-Whelen, S., Oswald, M., Swank, P. & Powers, L. (2009) Development of Measures of Abuse Among Women With Disabilities and the Characteristics of Their Perpetrators. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 15, No. 9, pp. 1001-1025.

'Sexual Assault and Women With Cognitive Disabilities: Codifying Discrimination in the United States'

Criminal sexual assault statutes vary across the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. However, most statutes mandate increased restrictions and penalties for crimes committed against victims with cognitive impairments. Current statutes pertaining to victims with cognitive impairments and the standards and methods typically used by courts to determine victims' capacity to consent are evaluated. The authors analyse these policies and demonstrate that the statutes stem from and perpetuate a legacy of systematic oppression including, but not limited to, the sexual exploitation and deprivation of people with cognitive impairments. They argue that current statutes not only fail to diminish but may also enhance the risk of sexual assault to adults with cognitive disabilities. The authors further argue that these statutes deprive adults with cognitive impairments of their civil liberties. They conclude with recommendations for changes in policy and practice.

Full Reference: Wacker, J., Parish, S. & Macy, R. (2008) 'Sexual Assault and Women With Cognitive Disabilities: Codifying Discrimination in the United States'. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, Vol. 19, pp. 86-94.

THE 'LIVING SAFER SEXUAL LIVES' PROJECT

This exciting new project has been funded by the Australian Government under the Respectful Relationships program as part of the National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children. A two year project which commenced in August 2009, will develop, implement and evaluate a peer led primary prevention of violence against women program with people with an intellectual disability and other cognitive disabilities and undertake research on the effectiveness of this model and on the broader issue of violence and abuse prevention for this group. The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society is undertaking this project in partnership with Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA).

The Project is in the early planning phase and is being coordinated by Dr Patsie Frawley, who is a Research Fellow at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society. Over the coming months, WWDA will be keeping members updated on the progress of the Project, and disseminating information on any consultation opportunities and other ways to be involved in the Project.

For more information contact:
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UNITED NATIONS DATABASE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Since its launch on 5 March 2009, the Secretary-General's database on violence against women has been updated. As at 9 July 2009, 78 Member States had submitted their responses to the questionnaire, which constitutes the primary source of information for the database. United Nations Country Teams have provided support, at the request of the Governments, in compiling responses to the questionnaire. Member States who have not yet submitted their responses are invited to do so at their earliest convenience, and all Member States are encouraged to continue to submit new and additional information and documents for inclusion in the database, as and when they become available. As WWDA reported in our last Newsletter, the Australian Government is in the process of compiling its response to the questionnaire, and is therefore, yet to be included on the database.

The database contains information on a multitude of initiatives, including:

- legislative measures undertaken by almost 160 Member States;
- national action plans/strategies adopted by over 40 Member States;
- institutional mechanisms established by over 40 Member States, including seven parliamentary committees;
- awareness-raising initiatives undertaken by over 50 Member States;
- specific surveys undertaken on violence against women in over 20 Member States;
- the establishment of specialized courts, prosecutors, police and other officials in almost 30 countries.

The database is available online at: <http://www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase>

NEW REPORT FROM BELGIUM: 'VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH A DISABILITY' (2008)

Persephone, the Belgium Union of women with a disability or a chronic and disabling disease, has published an updated study on violence against women with disabilities. The Report provides an overview of the research that already has been done, preventive actions that have been taken and support currently available. It also shows the gaps that still need to be filled in this matter; including for example, in the area of access to refuges.

The English version of the Report can be downloaded (in PDF only) from the Persephone website at: <http://www.persephonevzw.org>



NEW NATIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE INQUIRY ANNOUNCED

The 2009 report of the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children - *Time For Action* - identified the complex interaction between state and territory family and domestic violence and child protection laws and the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth). The National Council also stressed the importance of consistent interpretation and application of laws relating to family/domestic violence and sexual assault, including rules of evidence, in ensuring justice for victims of such violence. The National Council made a number of recommendations, including that the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) should undertake an inquiry into these laws. At its meeting of 16-17 April 2009, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) agreed that Australian law reform commissions should work together to consider these issues.

The Terms of Reference direct the ALRC to consider:

- the interaction in practice of state and territory family and domestic violence and child protection laws with the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) and relevant Commonwealth, state and territory criminal laws; and
- the impact of inconsistent interpretation or application of laws in cases of sexual assault occurring in a family/domestic violence context, including rules of evidence, on victims of such violence.

In relation to both issues, the ALRC is to consider what, if any, improvements could be made to relevant legal frameworks to protect the safety of women and their children.

Violence against women and children remains a profound problem in Australia. The protection of women and children is predominantly dealt with under state and territory family and domestic violence laws and child protection laws. These laws vary across the jurisdictions, which may result

in women and children being subject to different levels of protection depending upon where they live.

There also may be problems recognising and enforcing apprehended violence orders across state and territory borders. Another issue is how these laws interact with Commonwealth laws touching on family violence, such as the Family Law Act. The ALRC will explore whether the complexity of Australia's federal system causes problems, such as inconsistent or incompatible protective orders; any duplication of effort by federal, state and territory courts; or any gaps or inadequacies in the cooperation between those courts and state and territory agencies.

The ALRC will also consider how the law should enable women and children to report family and domestic violence, participate in legal processes, and access appropriate remedies; as well as facilitate the rehabilitation of perpetrators and the prevention of family violence in the first place.

The ALRC is planning to publish one or more consultation papers for community debate and feedback. The final report and recommendations are due to be provided to the Attorney-General by 31 July 2010.

To register an interest in the ALRC Inquiry, to receive email updates on the progress of the inquiry, as well as consultation papers when they are released, go to:

<http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/current/family-violence/register.html>

For more information on the ALRC Inquiry, go to:

<http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/current/family-violence/index.html>

HELP BUILD A NEW VISION FOR QUEENSLANDERS WITH DISABILITY AND THEIR FAMILIES

At present there are many Queenslanders with disability who don't get the support they need to live decent lives in the communities of their choice; and there is a high level of reliance on a funding and service delivery system that is predominately crisis driven.

Early in June this year, a collection of people involved in Queensland's disability sector - people with disability, family members, advocates, public servants, service providers, peak bodies, academics and other committed individuals - met for three days to undertake the Blue Skies Scenario Building Activity.

Version 1 of the scenario that the group developed (the Blue Skies Scenario) is now available on the Blue Skies website and is currently informing conversations about a vision for the future across the broader disability sector and stakeholder group.

All stakeholders in Queensland's disability service system are invited to participate by:

- reading the Blue Skies Scenario;
- considering the scenario that we have presented as an alternate vision for the future; and participating in the conversation (by offering your vision, your story, your voice).

For more information, including details on how you can participate, go to:

<http://www.blue-skies.info>

WWDA SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIAL REPORT UNDER CRPD

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights treaty and is the response of the international community to the long history of discrimination, exclusion and dehumanisation of people with disabilities. The CRPD is a legal tool which clarifies the obligations and legal duties of States to respect and ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights by all people with disabilities.

The CRPD was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 and opened for signature in March 2007. It was ratified by the Australian Government on July 2008, and entered into force in Australia in August 2008. Australia has also ratified the Optional Protocol to CRPD and this entered into force in this country on 20 September 2009. Australia's initial report under the CRPD is due to be submitted to the United Nations on 16 August 2010.

When a country ratifies an international human rights treaty, such as the CRPD, it assumes a legal obligation to implement the rights recognized in that treaty. But signing up is only the first step, because recognition of rights on paper is not sufficient to guarantee that they will be enjoyed in practice. So the country incurs an additional obligation to submit regular reports to the monitoring committee set up under that treaty on how the rights are being implemented.

To meet their reporting obligation under the CRPD, States must submit an initial report two years after joining and then every four years. In addition to the government report, the treaty bodies may receive information on a country's human rights situation from other sources, including non-governmental organizations, UN agencies,

other intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions and the press. In the light of all the information available, the Committee examines the report together with government representatives. Based on this dialogue, the Committee publishes its concerns and recommendations, referred to as "concluding observations".

The Australian Attorney General's Department is undertaking co-ordination of the Australian Government's initial report under the CRPD, and recently invited non-government organisations and members of the public to submit any *initial views* on information that they would like to see included in the Australian Government's report, or issues they think the Government should address, during the Government's current initial preparations for the report.

To this end, WWDA developed a brief submission to the Australian Attorney-General's Department, outlining some of the key issues WWDA believes should be addressed in the Government's initial report.

In general terms, WWDA recommended that:

- Consistent with Article 6 of the CRPD, the Government's initial report should clearly acknowledge that women with disabilities in Australia continue to be subject to multiple discriminations and violations of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, and,
- Consistent with Article 6 of the CRPD, the Government's initial report should detail any specific measures undertaken by Government/s to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In relation to issues facing women with disabilities in Australia, WWDA recommended that the following issues/matters should be considered for inclusion, and that The Government's initial report should detail any specific measures undertaken to address the substance of the CRPD Articles relevant to these issues:

- Forced sterilisation of girls and women with disabilities (CRPD Articles 15-17, 23, 25)
- The right to reproductive freedom (CRPD Articles 4-8, 12, 13, 16, 19, 23, 25)
- The right to found and maintain a family (CRPD Articles 4-8, 12, 13, 16, 19, 23, 25)
- The right to freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (CRPD Articles 4, 6-8, 12-17, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28)
- The right to work (CRPD Article 27)
- The right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing (CRPD Articles 19, 28)
- The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (CRPD Articles: 8b, 9, 15-17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28)
- Data, statistics & research (CRPD Article 31)

WWDA's *Submission to the Attorney-General's Department on initial views to inform the Australian Government's report under CRPD* can be downloaded in either PDF or Word from WWDA's website. Go to: www.wwda.org.au/subs2006.htm

Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, please contact wwda@wwda.org.au

CEDAW NGO SHADOW REPORT

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and ratified by the Australian Government in 1983. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it defines discrimination against women as: *'Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.'* It also establishes an agenda of action for putting an end to sex-based discrimination.

In 1991, the monitoring body of CEDAW passed General Recommendation 18, to ensure that States Parties understand that CEDAW also covers the human rights of disabled women. General Recommendation 18 states: *'.....that States parties provide information on disabled women in their periodic reports, and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, including special measures to ensure that they have equal access to education and employment, health services and social security, and to ensure that they can participate in all areas of social and cultural life.'*

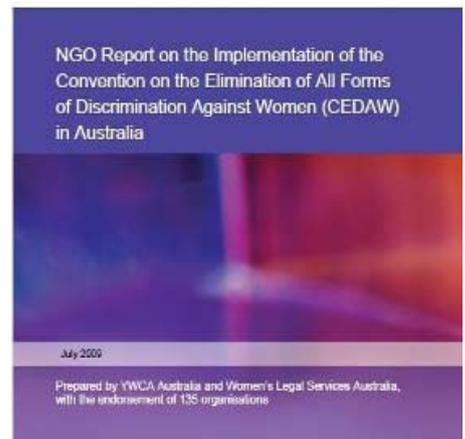
Australia acceded to the CEDAW Optional Protocol (OP) in December 2008, and the CEDAW OP entered into force in Australia in March 2009. The OP provides for complaints to be taken directly to the United Nations (UN), after all domestic remedies have been exhausted. It also enables the CEDAW Committee to investigate claims of serious violations of CEDAW in Australia.

To meet its reporting obligation under CEDAW, the Australian Government is required to submit a report to the UN every four years, detailing how CEDAW is being implemented in Australia. The Australian Government submitted its combined 6th and 7th Country Report to the CEDAW Committee in December 2008. The non-government sector submitted its complementary (or 'Shadow') NGO Report in July 2009 to provide independent information and critique for the CEDAW Committee to take into account while reviewing the Australian Government Report at the pre-session in August 2009, and the constructive dialogue with the Australian Government in July 2010.

WWDA was involved in the process of developing the CEDAW NGO Report, which was completed in late July 2009. Women with disabilities from around Australia participated in many of the consultations to inform the Report. Christina Ryan, WWDA member from the ACT, represented WWDA on the CEDAW NGO Project National Advisory Committee.

The CEDAW NGO Report examines in detail the implementation of the CEDAW articles in Australia, looking at both positive developments during the reporting period, as well as challenges remaining. Issues facing women with disabilities are well represented throughout the Report, particularly in relation to areas such as: work; education; violence; sterilisation; health; housing; equality before the law, and parenting.

The NGO Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Australia is available for download in



either PDF format [2.5MB] or Word format [2.1MB] at: <http://www.ywca.org.au/policy/cedaw.php> Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, please contact WWDA at wwda@wwda.org.au

'Women in Australia' - the Australian Governments combined 6th and 7th Country Report to the CEDAW Committee is available online in HTML or PDF formats. Go to: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/govtint/cedaw_reports/cedaw_2008/Pages/default.aspx

More information on CEDAW, including a range of educative resource materials can be found on WWDA's website at: www.wwda.org.au/hrcore1.htm

CULTURAL STIGMA AND MYTH: DISABLED WOMEN IN KENYA ARE VULNERABLE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

By Rosemary Okello, Kenya
The Women's International Perspective (www.thewip.net)
March 4, 2009

In the face of escalating sexual violence in Kenya, women with disabilities are more vulnerable than ever. A recent study by the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA-K) - a women's rights advocacy organization that works for gender equality through legal aid - reveals that disabled women are up to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than their non-disabled counterparts.

Patricia Nyaundi, FIDA-K's Executive Director, says that disabled women in Kenya are abused sexually under the pretext of culture and myths. Miriam Muto agrees. Program Co-coordinator for the Empowerment Resource Development Center in Nairobi and Vice Chairperson of Women's Challenge, she points to a tragic misconception, "There is the belief that if one sleeps with a disabled woman, there are chances of a cure for AIDS."

13 year old Nekesa, who is both physically and mentally disabled, was raped because of these myths. She has since given birth to a normal child, but is oblivious to what is happening around her.

"Society believes that we are not sexually attractive. When a disabled woman tests HIV positive, people normally raise eyebrows



Photograph by Flickr user [angela7dreams](#) used under Creative Commons licenses.

of incredulity to the point of even asking how people with a disability can have sexual feelings," says Muto, who adds, "My disability does not affect my womanhood." She describes her daily experiences as a commuter on public transport as a traumatizing ordeal. "I have to be lifted up by men to get in and out of the vehicle. Some of them touch me inappropriately."

"At one time a matatu tout (mini-bus driver) asked me, "Si wewe hufurahi ukishikwa shikwa?" (You must be happy when men touch you all the time). This memory brings tears to her eyes. She also recounts how she was once mugged on University Way in Nairobi: "I was in a public vehicle when thugs beat me up and took my purse. When I screamed for help, they pulled out a dagger." Her fellow passengers ran off, but there was little she could do to escape, being limited in her mobility. "Fearing that I could be raped, I jumped from the matatu (mini-bus), but in hindsight I realize that the experience could have disabled me further," she says.

Another young woman in a wheelchair asserts that these stories are just the tip of the iceberg. "The reality is much worse, and the real story is yet to be told. Rape and sexual abuse for women like me is an everyday occurrence. When we are raped, we don't know where to go or who to report to. There is always the fear that something worse could happen to you (by reporting)."

During the 2008 16 Days of Activism campaign to fight gender-based violence, participating organizations such as the Coalition on Violence Against Women in Kenya, FIDA-K and others acknowledged the challenge of addressing the problem when there exists no data that separates violence against the disabled from the rest of the population.

Despite various indicators showing the prevalence and disturbing nature of abuse perpetrated against women with disabilities, such violence is rarely acknowledged. Society's negative perceptions and ostracism

of women with disabilities affords them an invisible status, resulting in increased exposure to violence and fewer opportunities for recourse.

SOCIAL STIGMA, INADEQUATE SERVICES

Duncan Mwangi, Executive Officer for the Association of the Physically Disabled, says that society perceives disabled women as a bad omen. Men who cohabit with disabled women usually come home late and leave early in the morning so that they are not seen with them. "They are not allowed to inherit property because of their disabilities and this leaves them destitute and poor," explains Mwangi.

Nairobi resident Amana Ali adds that mothers have been divorced for bearing children with disabilities: "My sister was divorced for bearing a baby boy with mental impairment. Her father-in-law said, 'the earlier you get rid of her, the better for everyone. These things do not run in our family.'"

Kenya's last official census⁵ (1989) estimated that 0.7% of the total population (then estimated at 21.4 million) was disabled. This figure is widely regarded as a gross underestimate. Today, the government estimates that 5% of the population is physically disabled and yet the UN asserts that 10% of every country's population is disabled in some way. Given Kenya's current population of nearly 38 million, the country's disabled could range from 1.9-3.8 million people, mostly with deformed limbs and eye afflictions resulting from poor birth-delivery conditions.

"Since disability is stigmatized in Kenya, many families tend to lock their children indoors, so knowing the exact figures of how many people are disabled in Kenya - especially women - can be very tricky," explains Ms. Nyaundi. A needs assessment survey carried by the various NGOs indicates that mental disability is highest among women, followed by physical then visual impairments.

Even if violence against women with disabilities is recognized, available services are often inadequate and strewn with obstacles. After navigating precarious roads and ramps too steep or too narrow for wheelchairs, the women find that national service providers lack the training and resources to meet their needs. The women are usually then referred to separate organizations specializing in disability.

Ms. Muto adds that those with hearing and visual impairment have been compromised. "There is a communication barrier in terms of dissemination. Information contained in posters is not available in Braille, which is a major drawback in terms of making information accessible to everyone." Often no sign language interpreters are provided for the deaf. The same exasperating scenario applies to women who seek justice in the legal system, where the majority cannot afford legal fees.

LEGAL SYSTEM

Ms. Nyaundi argues that the rights of women with disabilities are being violated every day because of a lack of clear laws and policies guiding the handling of their issues. Though Kenya does have a Sexual Offenses Act, issues that affect women with disabilities were never spelled out within the legislation. "Unless the issue of disability is enshrined within the Constitution," she points out, "issues like the sexual abuse of women with disabilities in Kenya will not get the serious attention they deserve."

Kenya has ratified and domesticated international laws on people with disabilities, yet implementation is lacking – particularly with regards to legal and human rights. Taking matters into their own hands, the disabled in Kenya formed a taskforce in 1997 and presented a draft bill based on information collected from people with disabilities all over Kenya. In April 2003, the bill was brought before Parliament for discussion and was finally enacted. Dubbed the Persons



with Disabilities Act 2003, the Act defines disability as a "physical, sensory, mental or other impairment, including any visual, hearing, learning or physical incapability, which impacts on social, economic or environmental participation."

Even though the Act provides for the establishment of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) to be the focal point for all issues relating to the disabled, with provisions to ensure that persons with disabilities are educated, employed and participate fully in sporting recreational and cultural activities, the rights of disabled women are still being violated.

Ms. Muto calls on the government to put disability on the national agenda in earnest. "Those who agitate for human rights should also include the rights of women with disabilities. We cannot access public toilets, public transport and even delivery tables, so where are our rights?"

NB: This article was originally published in The Women's International Perspective (www.thewip.net) and is reproduced here with permission. WWDA thanks WIP for allowing us to republish this important article.

CAPTIONED TELEPHONY - WEB CAPTIONED TELEPHONY TRIAL

A new technology is being trialed in Australia for the first time – captioned telephony (CapTel). Captioned telephones have been successfully used in the USA for over six years. Users are reporting that they now feel confident using the phone again and that it has helped them in their professional and personal lives.

Right now more than 3 million Australians have difficulty using the phone effectively. To meet this need, Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) will launch a web based captioned telephony service this year and participation in the trial is free. With this service, you can make a phone call using

your normal phone but you can also use a computer (with internet access) to read live captions on your computer screen.

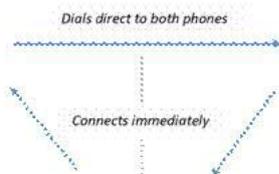
The captions show you every word that the other person is saying. Captioned telephony is ideal for the many Australians who have acquired hearing loss through age or industrial deafness, those with cochlear implants and for young Australians who have never used a TTY. ACE is looking for participants in the first web captioned telephony trial. Here is some more information on the service:

KEY BENEFITS

- Captioned telephony provides faster more natural communication on the telephone.
- Captioned telephony is ideal for people who can speak but have difficulty hearing.
- There is no extra equipment needed. All you need is any telephone and a computer with an internet connection. You can even use an iPhone™ or smart phone to get captions on the go!
- The technology is simple, easy to use and can be used anywhere (at work or at home).
- There will be wide-spread social and economic benefits as a result of captioned telephony.



Web CapTel User:
The Web CapTel User can use any phone and a computer with an internet connection. They log on to the internet and type the number they want to call.



Hearing person:
The hearing person takes the call and communicates as they normally would. The call is simultaneously connected to the ACE Captioning Service.



ACE Captioning Service:
The ACE Relay Officer transcribes everything the hearing person says into captions for the Web CapTel User.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

If you would like to take part, go to www.aceinfo.net.au and register your interest. Alternatively, please email info@aceinfo.net.au. There is no cost for participating in the trial.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES NEED PAP SMEARS TOO!

It has been well documented that women with disabilities are less likely than other women to participate in cervical screening¹. The South Australian Cervix Screening Program (SACSP) recognises the numerous structural, educational and attitudinal barriers women with disabilities face.

The Program is committed to raising awareness and facilitating smoother access pathways to Pap smear services for women with disabilities. SACSP has engaged the South Australian disability sector through:

- Fostering partnerships between disability organisations and Pap smear service providers
- Annual information and ideas seminars at Disability Information Resource Centre
- Promoting annual Pap Smear Awareness Week (PSAW) community small grants
- Educational Promotional activities at recent metropolitan and rural DisAbility expos;
- In partnership with the National Cervical Screening Program, distribute extensive range of resources in Braille, large print audio and illustrated story forms

Attending DisAbility expos provides SACSP a unique opportunity to network with key disability organisations (both government and non government) and to engage and initiate discussions with community women, their families and carers.

Through networking at expos, organisations register for the SACSP seminar the following month at the Disability Information Resource Centre.

The seminar focuses on the latest information in cervical cancer for women with disabilities, exploring ideas and partnerships that will support women with disabilities to make informed decisions regarding their participation in regular screening.

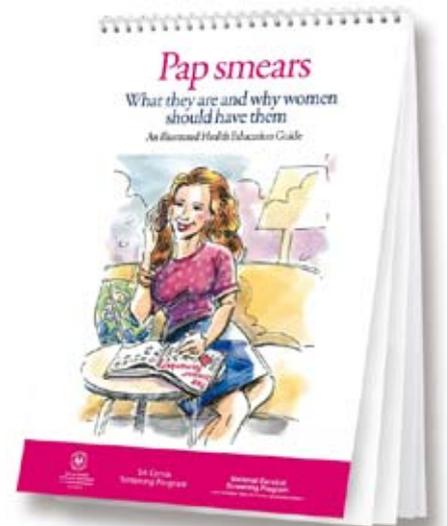
As a result, SACSP has witnessed an increase in the number of disability organisations involved in the annual Pap Smear Awareness Week campaign. Small community grant funded events have steadily increased over the past three years. In 2009 seven rural and metropolitan disability organisations held events in May including the successful partnership between Paraquad SA and Shine SA. This partnership supported women with spinal cord injuries to gain access to appropriate Pap smear screening.

As a result of the growing partnership between the disability sector and SACSP, the Program has developed a unique resource package. The package includes:

- an illustrated 8 page pictorial booklet
- a Flip Chart, and
- CD PowerPoint presentation.

These illustrated resources provide information in a format which is accessible to women who have little or no experience of Pap smears. The information is presented with workers, carers and families in mind. Women who may benefit from visual story telling include young women and women with intellectual and/or learning disabilities.

To place an order for these resources, please visit www.cervixscreening.sa.gov.au



¹ Johnson, K; Strong, R; Hillier, L; & Pitts, M (2002) Screened Out! Women with Disabilities and Cervical Screening, Pap Screen Victoria, The Cancer Council Victoria.

STERILISATION OF MINORS FALLS OFF THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Many readers of WWDA's Newsletters and reports over the past decade will know of our long running advocacy on the issue of sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities, particularly our systemic advocacy work on the forced sterilisation of minors.

Despite the many international human rights treaties and instruments ratified by Australia, and despite strong condemnation of forced sterilisation from many sources including women's organisations, disability rights organisations and international and national human rights bodies, women and girls with disabilities in Australia still experience, and face a serious threat of forced sterilisation. For more than a decade, WWDA has called on the Australian Government to take all necessary steps to stop the forced sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities.

This work has included calls for the Australian Governments to:

- develop universal legislation which prohibits sterilisation of any child unless there is a serious threat to health or life;
- address the cultural, social and economic factors which drive the sterilisation agenda;
- commit resources to assist disabled women and girls and their families and carers to access appropriate reproductive health care; and,
- create the social context in which all women and girls are valued and respected (Dowse 2004, WWDA 2007, 2009).

It would appear that the Australian Government remains of the view that sterilisation is acceptable for children [girls] with disabilities. This is clearly reflected in its *Fourth Report to the UN under the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (October 2008), in relation to Sterilisation of Children with Disabilities (159, p31):

A blanket prohibition on the sterilisation of children could lead to negative consequences for some individuals. Applications for sterilisation are made in a variety of circumstances. Sometimes sterilisation is necessary to prevent serious damage to a child's health, for example, in a case of severe menstrual bleeding where hormonal or other treatments are contraindicated. The child may not be sexually active and contraception may not be an issue, but the concern is the impact on the child's quality of life if they are prevented from participating to an ordinary extent in school and social life.

The statement above not only frames sterilisation as a medical issue (as opposed to a human rights issue) but also infers that sterilisation is acceptable for children [girls] with disabilities, and that prohibiting sterilisation of minors (except in those circumstances where there is a serious threat to health or life), will somehow adversely impact on children [girls] with disabilities.

Despite the many international human rights treaties and instruments ratified by Australia, and despite an Australian Government which claims to be committed to 'work to promote human rights and the fundamental equality of all people' (McClelland 2008),

Australian legislation still fails to prohibit non-therapeutic sterilisation of minors. The Australian Governments have essentially dismissed the issue, deciding there is little worth in protecting the fundamental right of women and girls with disabilities to bodily integrity. WWDA recently received a reply from the Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland, to one of our many letters regarding this issue. The Attorney-General's reply, stated in part:

'The concerns and issues raised by WWDA in regard to sterilisation of children have been considered and reviewed. Without at all minimising the importance of this matter, I am advised that existing processes in place in each jurisdiction to oversee and manage the authorisation of sterilisation procedures are working adequately. Improvements in treatment options and wider awareness of the availability of non-surgical alternatives to manage the menstruation and contraceptive needs of minors with a decision-making disability would seem to have had a positive impact in reducing requests for and the use of sterilisation. I also understand that doctors and hospitals have an increased appreciation and understanding of their legal obligations as a result of actions taken to provide them with relevant information including, for example, amendment of the Medical Benefits Scheme to advise doctors of their obligation to obtain the approval of relevant courts or tribunals before performing sterilisation procedures.'

Following further consideration of the issue in March 2008, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General [SCAG] determined not to pursue the issue of model legislation relating to sterilisation of minors with an

intellectual disability. While appreciating your organisation's long advocacy on this issue, given the improvements and circumstances noted above, I do not propose at this time to develop Commonwealth legislation or to pursue the issue further through SCAG.'

There have been no instances in Australia where authorisations to sterilise have been sought for minors without disabilities in the absence of a threat to life or health. The sterilisation of a child in circumstances other than where there is a serious threat to the health or life of that child effectively denies the child present and future enjoyment of her or his human rights. Children with disabilities have the same right as children without disabilities not to be sterilised.

Despite the Australian Government's position, WWDA will continue to advocate for women and girls with disabilities' fundamental right to bodily integrity and to reproductive freedom.

WWDA remains of the view that the sterilisation of minors is in contravention of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)* – three of the core international human rights treaties which have been ratified by Australia.

WWDA is not alone – the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed its deep concern about *'the prevailing practice of forced sterilisation of children with disabilities, particularly girls with disabilities'*, urged States parties to *'prohibit by law the sterilisation of children*

on grounds of disability' and more than four years ago, encouraged Australia to *'prohibit the sterilisation of children, with or without disabilities...'*

For more information on WWDA's work on Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities, go to: <http://www.wwda.org.au/sterilise.htm>

For a copy of the *Australian Government's Fourth Report to the UN under the Convention on the Rights of the Child* contact: <http://www.wwda.org.au>

GOVERNMENT RELEASES DRAFT NATIONAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE STRATEGY FOR CONSULTATION

On 31st August 2009, the Australian Government released the draft of Australia's first National Primary Health Care Strategy: *Building a 21st Century Primary Health Care System: A Draft of Australia's National Primary Health Care Strategy* (the Draft Strategy).

Primary health care is the first point of connection with the health system and needs to be able to cope with the full range of challenges that emerge including prevention, adequate care for the sick and managing complex chronic conditions in partnership with other health sectors.

The Draft Strategy has been developed alongside the work of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the National Preventative Health Taskforce.

The Draft Strategy has 5 key building blocks as essential system wide underpinnings:

- 1) Regional integration
- 2) Information and Technology (including eHealth)
- 3) Skilled Workforce
- 4) Infrastructure, and
- 5) Financing and System Performance.

The Draft Strategy also identifies four priority areas where changes will most directly impact primary health care consumers and health professionals:

- Improving Access and Reducing Inequity
- Better Management of Chronic Conditions
- Increasing the Focus on Prevention
- Improving Quality, Safety, Performance and Accountability

The Government is undertaking a series of face-to-face consultations and is using its Your Health Website to seek the views of Australians on the proposed health reform options. For more information on how you can have input, go to: <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/Primary%20Health%20Care>

MORE INFORMATION

A copy of *Building a 21st Century Primary Health Care System: A Draft of Australia's National Primary Health Care Strategy* is available online in both HTML and PDF formats. Go to: <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/nphc-draft-report-toc>

A copy of the supporting report *Primary Health Care Reform in Australia: Report to Support Australia's First National Primary Health Care Strategy* is also available online in both HTML and PDF formats. Go to: <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/nphc-draftreportsupp-toc>

GOVERNMENT RELEASES NATIONAL PREVENTATIVE HEALTH STRATEGY

The Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon, launched the National Preventative Health Strategy on 1 September 2009.

The Strategy provides a blueprint for tackling the burden of chronic disease currently caused by obesity, tobacco, and excessive consumption of alcohol. It is directed at primary prevention and addresses all relevant arms of policy and all available points of leverage, in both the health and non-health sectors.

The Strategy comprises three parts: an overview; a roadmap for action; and technical papers focused on the three key areas - obesity, tobacco and alcohol. The Strategy documents can be downloaded from: <http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/national-preventative-health-strategy-11p>

Alternatively, if you would like a copy of the documents emailed to you, please contact WWDA at wwda@wwda.org.au
The documents are available in both Word and PDF formats.



THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is a free and independent alternative dispute resolution scheme for small business and residential consumers in Australia who have a complaint about their telephone or Internet service. The TIO is authorised to investigate complaints about the provision or supply of telephone or Internet services.

The TIO investigates complaints by considering the facts provided by both parties in a dispute. The TIO is not a consumer advocacy service but rather seeks to assist both parties to a dispute by reaching a fair and equitable resolution. The TIO has jurisdiction to investigate complaints about:

- The standard telephone service;
- Mobile services;
- Internet access;
- Pay-phones;
- Delays in telephone connections;
- Printed and electronic White Pages;
- Fault repair;
- Privacy;
- Land access; and
- Breaches of the Customer Service Guarantee and industry Codes of Practice.

Complaints to the TIO can be made online or by phone, fax, email, in writing, via TTY or in person. Complaints may be made by the person with the problem or by a person authorised to represent the complainant.

For more information:

Ph: 1800 062 058 for enquiries and complaints

TTY: 1800 675 692

Web: www.tio.com.au

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES WESTERN AUSTRALIA (WWDWA)

WWDWA is a non-profit incorporated organisation that is run BY women with disabilities FOR women with disabilities. We are currently supported in our work by the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre who provide the co-ordinator with office space and administration support. We have monthly forums on a wide range of topics of interest to women with disabilities in Perth. The forums are held on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of every month at the Subiaco Arts Centre, 180 Hamersley Road, Subiaco from 1-4 pm. We also provide input to government and the community on the issues that women with disabilities face. WWDWA were finalists in the 2007 Community Services Industry Awards.

So far the WWDWA forums have covered a range of topics including: women's health and sexuality, first aid, protective behaviours, menopause, financial management, self defence and healthy eating. Future forums planned include: volunteering, independent living, keeping fit with a disability, and much, much more. We work to provide input on health, family and domestic violence, housing, employment, parenting, sexual health and financial issues as well as supporting each other to become more involved in advocating for a better future for women with disabilities.

Women with any kind of disability can become involved. We also welcome able-bodied women as volunteers to help out at the forums. We are a fun, friendly group of women from a variety of backgrounds, and always welcome new members. Come along!

To find out more contact:

Co-ordinator; Rayna Lamb on (08) 9388 7455 or (08) 9380 9656

Email: womenwdwa@yahoo.com.au

Visit the WWDWA website - <http://womenwithdisabilitieswainc.blogspot.com>



RESOURCES – BOOKS, REPORTS, WEBSITES, LISTS



AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATION EXCHANGE

Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) released its new look, feel, brand and logo website on the 7th July 2009. The website was developed and released in line with ACE's rebranding and provision of new and innovative services. Included in their new website is Auslan video captioning located throughout the website under each section heading. The website was designed to be informative as well as a medium for feedback, enquiries and support. The site is functional and interactive, allowing users of the website to leave feedback or enquire about the ACE Video Relay Service (VRS) service or if the user requires general information. Have a look at www.aceinfo.net.au regularly as ACE provides updates on new applications and services it plans on introducing to the communities it serves.

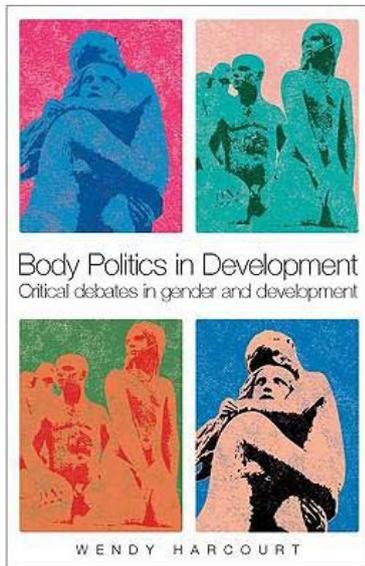
MEDIA ACCESS AUSTRALIA AWARE PROJECT - THE AUSTRALIAN WEB ACCESS REVIEW

The AWARE project was created by Media Access Australia (MAA) to provide an easy way for people to have a say about the accessibility of prominent websites. In the past this has been difficult due to the technical nature of accessibility audits, the cost involved in obtaining an audit or the fear of trying to approach a large organisation with an inaccessible website. AWARE addresses these concerns by giving people who face accessibility issues the opportunity to directly review them online, and discuss the issues in the forums.

The results from the review will remain a public resource and be used to work with the website owners to address the relevant access issues faced by people with disabilities. Media Access Australia (MAA) is an independent not-for-profit, public benevolent institution and Australia's primary media access organisation.

Go to: <http://www.aware.org.au>

RESOURCES – BOOKS, REPORTS, WEBSITES, LISTS



NEW BOOK: BODY POLITICS IN DEVELOPMENT

Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development, by Wendy Harcourt, explores how activists around the world have organized to fight for their economic and social rights and well-being to end violence against women and militarism, to promote sexual and reproductive rights, and to protect bodily integrity in the face of the new biotechnologies. Seeing the body as a fluid site of power and political contestation where specific cultural, social and economic realities and struggles are played out, Harcourt looks at body politics from the intimate and personal within self, family and community to the public at national and global levels and discourses. Using narrative, interview, analysis and theory to bring out the importance of different facets of body politics, this accessible book translates feminist and development discourse into vitally relevant material for all those interested in human rights and social justice.

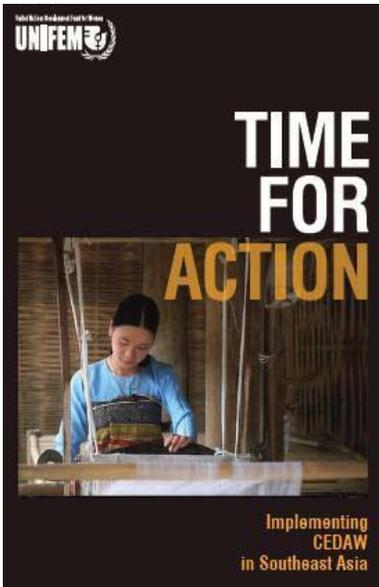
Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development
By Wendy Harcourt. ISBN: 9781842779354. Pages: 176
Available in Australia through Booktopia. See: <http://www.booktopia.com.au>

DISABILITY STUDIES AND RESEARCH CENTRE APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR

The Disability Studies and Research Centre (DSRC) is excited to announce the appointment of Dr Kristy Muir as the new Director of DSRC. Rosemary Kayess has been appointed as Associate Director. Kristy is looking forward to building the capacity of the Disability Studies and Research Centre and working closely with the NGO, community, scholarly and government disability sectors. Kristy was previously a Senior Research Fellow and the Evaluation Manager at the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW. During this time, Kristy obtained substantial research funding and led numerous research projects and evaluations in the areas of disability, mental health, caring, families and young people, and service models and supports for people with disability. She has a PhD (University of Wollongong) in social history and considerable experience conducting social research relating to disability. She previously worked in the NGO sector as a researcher and spent eight years working with children and adults with cognitive and physical disability and their families in an integration and respite capacity.

For more information:
Disability Studies and Research Centre (DSRC)
University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052.
Ph: 02 9385 9908
Email: dsrc@unsw.edu.au
Web: <http://dsrc.arts.unsw.edu.au>

RESOURCES – BOOKS, REPORTS, WEBSITES, LISTS



REPORT: CEDAW IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

This publication *'Time for Action: CEDAW Implementation in Southeast Asia'* (2009) presents the various ways in which both governments and civil society actors have used the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to make the promise of non-discrimination and equality one step closer to reality for women. The book is born out of UNIFEM's concentrated efforts in raising awareness about the Convention and women's rights among both duty bearers and rights holders in seven countries in Southeast Asia – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam. It shows how CEDAW has been used in advocacy for stronger legal frameworks that prohibit discrimination against women and advance women's human rights, in sensitizing the justice system to protect the rights of women, in guiding local development and budget allocation processes. It demonstrates the innovative ways in which civil society organizations are popularising CEDAW, reaching out to excluded groups of women, and using it as a means to hold their government accountable.

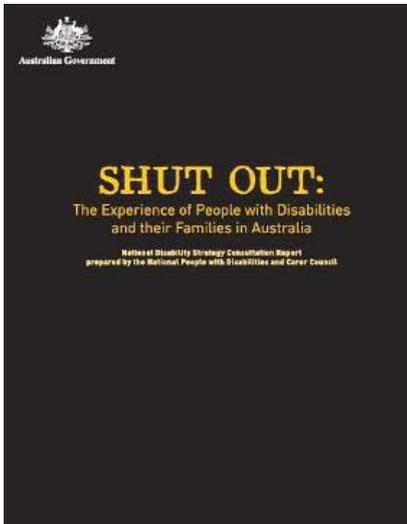
The Report is available online in PDF format. Go to:
http://cedaw-seasia.org/resource_documents.html#time4action

NEW NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATION

The Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc, (NIRWA) is an independent body seeking to advocate for immigrant and refugee women at a national level by working to achieve cultural, social, economic, educational and gender equality for all immigrant and refugee women living in Australia and to work with other women's organisations to advocate collectively on common issues affecting all women. NIRWA invites organisations which are operated by and are involved with Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) immigrant and refugee women and those working with CALD women as well as individual women who wish to be engaged in the work of NIRWA, to become members.

For more information:
Web: www.nirwa.org.au
Email: woman@nirwa.org.au

RESOURCES – BOOKS, REPORTS, WEBSITES, LISTS



REPORT: 'SHUT OUT: THE EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA'

This recently released report '*Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia*' is the report from the National Disability Strategy Consultation, and was prepared by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council 2009.

"Many of the large institutions that housed generations of people with disabilities — out of sight and out of mind — are now closed. Australians with disabilities are now largely free to live in the community. Once shut in, many people with disabilities now find themselves shut out. People with disabilities may be present in our community, but too few are actually part of it. Many live desperate and lonely lives of exclusion and isolation. The institutions that once housed them may be closed, but the inequity remains. Where once they were physically segregated, many Australians with disabilities now find themselves socially, culturally and politically isolated. They are ignored, invisible and silent. They struggle to be noticed, they struggle to be seen, they struggle to have their voices heard. What you will read in this report is their attempt to break down the walls of silence and finally have their story told."

The Report is available online in HTML, PDF and RTF formats, and can be accessed at: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy/community_consult/Pages/default.aspx

Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, contact wwda@wwda.org.au

NEW ONLINE PTSD SUPPORT NETWORK

This newly established online group is a community of those living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), family members and friends dedicated to dealing with Post Traumatic Stress, together. For more information, go to:

<http://www.mdjunction.com/forums/post-traumatic-stress-discussions/introductions-personal-stories>

NOTICE OF WWDA AGM

**WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES
AUSTRALIA (WWDA)
INCORPORATED
ABN 23 627 650 121**

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2009

Women with Disabilities (Australia) Incorporated (the "Incorporated Association") gives notice that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday October 29th 2008 at 12.00pm EST via TELECONFERENCE.

Date: 25 September 2009
By order of the Committee

Carolyn Frohmader
Executive Director on behalf of the
WWDA National Management
Committee

JOIN WWDA!

The success of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) relies heavily on the participation and goodwill of our members. We are always seeking women with disabilities who would like to represent WWDA at government consultations, workshops, forums and committees, as well as helping us in other ways such as commenting on WWDA documents and reports; presenting papers at Conferences; writing articles for our website, becoming members of our Management Committee and so on. WWDA is a Public Benevolent Institution, which means that donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Remember, becoming a financial member of WWDA entitles you to nominate for the Management Committee when vacancies arise and/or vote at annual elections.

WWDA's Membership Form is available from the WWDA website at: <http://www.wwda.org.au/member.htm>

or by contacting WWDA

NEWS WANTED FOR WWDA- NEWS!

Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) produces this newsletter, WWDA-News, quarterly.

If any organisation or individual has any relevant information/news that you would like to share please forward to wwda@wwda.org.au for inclusion.

Each quarter we will send a friendly reminder asking for any valuable input. We look forward to hearing from you.



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Email: wwda@wwda.org.au
Web: www.wwda.org.au