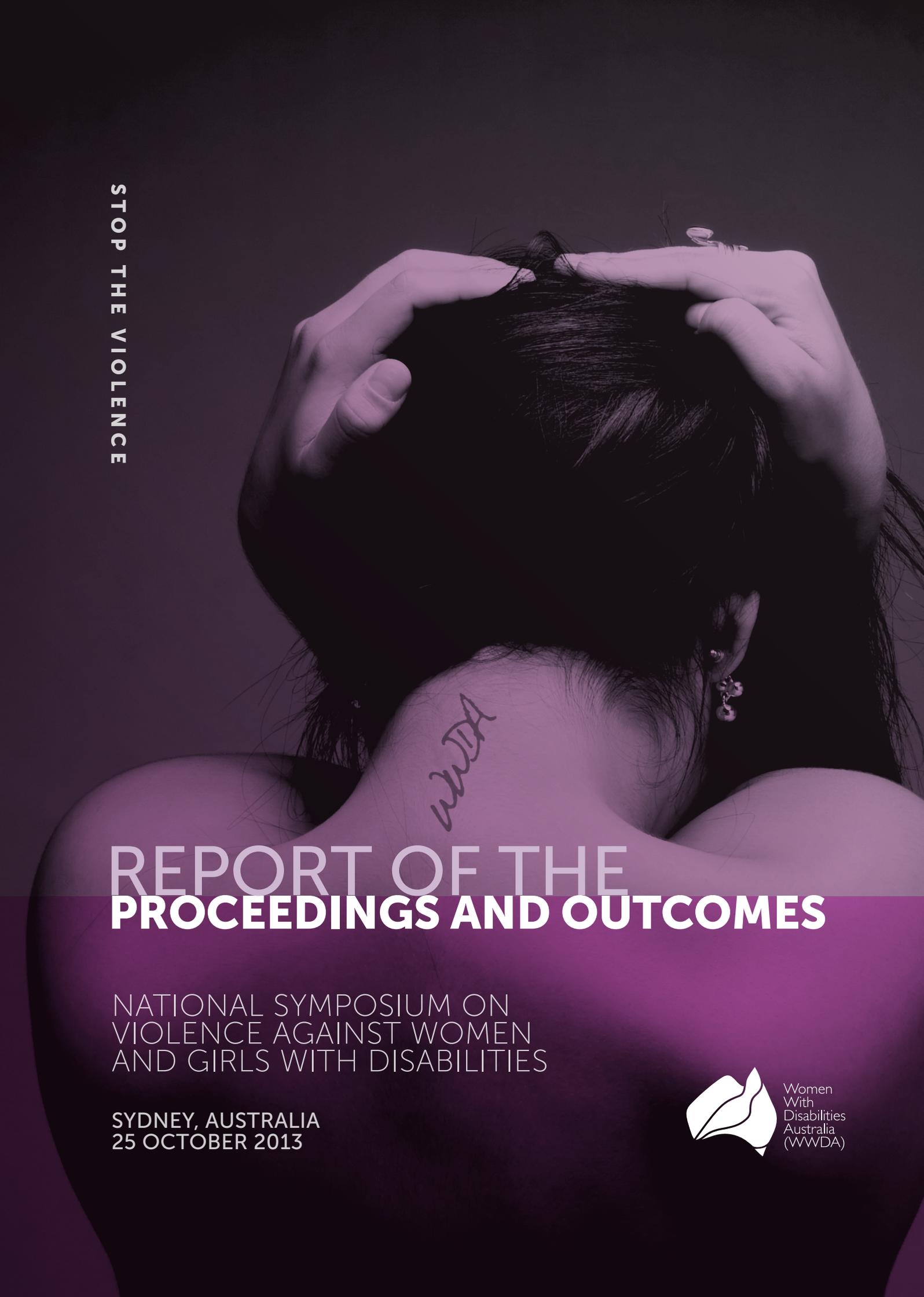


STOP THE VIOLENCE



REPORT OF THE
PROCEEDINGS AND OUTCOMES

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
25 OCTOBER 2013



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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP	6
OPENING ADDRESS BY THE HON MICHAELIA CASH, MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR WOMEN	7
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY MS ELIZABETH BRODERICK, PROJECT STEERING GROUP CHAIR AND SEX DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION	11
MESSAGE FROM MS KARIN SWIFT, PRESIDENT OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AUSTRALIA	13
PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM	16
Program	17
Plenary 1: Key Issues in Violence and Women and Girls with Disabilities	18
Plenary 2: Challenges and Opportunities for Change	19
Working Group Sessions	21
OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: FUTURE DIRECTIONS	22
Area 1: Information, Education and Capacity Building for Women and Girls with Disabilities	22
Area 2: Awareness Raising for the Broader Community	23
Area 3: Education and Training for Service Providers	24
Area 4: Service Sector Development and Reform	25
Area 5: Legislation, National Agreements and Policy Frameworks	26
Area 6: Evidence Gathering, Research and Development	27
Area 7: Establishment and Development of the Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities	28
Area 8: Establishment of a National Women with Disabilities Expert Panel on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities	30
APPENDICES	31
Communiqué from the National Symposium.....	31
About the Stop The Violence Project	34
National Symposium Attendees	35

ABBREVIATIONS

AHRC	<u>Australian Human Rights Commission</u>
AHRC	<u>Australian Human Rights Commission</u>
CALD	<u>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</u>
CEDAW	<u>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</u>
COAG	<u>Council of Australian Governments</u>
CSW	<u>Commission on the Status of Women</u>
ECG	<u>Expert Consultative Group</u>
EDAC	<u>Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre</u>
LGBTQI	<u>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer and Inter-sex</u>
NCAS	<u>National Community Attitudes Survey</u>
NCE	<u>National Centre of Excellence</u>
NDIS	<u>National Disability Insurance Scheme</u>
NDISRG	<u>National Disability Insurance Scheme Reference Group</u>
NDS	<u>National Disability Services</u>
NPIP	<u>National Plan Implementation Plan</u>
PIC	<u>Project Implementation Committee</u>
PSG	<u>Project Steering Group</u>
PSS	<u>Personal Safety Survey</u>
PWDA	<u>People with Disability Australia</u>
STVP	<u>Stop the Violence Project</u>
UNSW	<u>University of New South Wales</u>
WWDA	<u>Women With Disabilities Australia</u>

INTRODUCTION

The one-day National Symposium on Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities was held at the Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney on Friday 25 October 2013. The National Symposium was part of the activities of the Stop the Violence Project (STVP) funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and implemented by Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA).

The purpose of the National Symposium was to engage high-level stakeholders and decision-makers to address issues of violence against women and girls with disabilities in Australia in order to develop measures for longer term sustainability for change relating to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2010-2022. The National Symposium sought to foster collaborative approaches to policy development by strengthening cross-sector relationships and leadership for sustaining change in the identification and implementation of better practice models to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The aims of the National Symposium were:

- to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and girls with disabilities;
- to engage high level stakeholders and decision-makers in moving forward to address violence against women and girls with disabilities;
- to discuss issues identified by the evidence gathering exercise for the STVP;
- to promote, canvass and consult on good policy and practice measures and models;
- to promote cross-sector collaborative relationships for systems integration;
- to share information on what works and what doesn't work; and
- to provide leadership for sustaining change in the identification and implementation of better practice models of policy, program, service system development and responses which will prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The National Symposium provided an interactive forum for exchange of ideas and information on key thematic areas and mechanisms for preventing and addressing violence against women and girls with disabilities in Australia.



PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER STOP THE VIOLENCE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Violence against women and girls is utterly unacceptable. It is unacceptable in Australia and unacceptable across the world.

The Stop the Violence National Symposium is confronting the serious issue of violence against women and girls. In particular it will focus on confronting violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The Symposium is also promoting the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

I am working with my colleague and Minister Assisting for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, to ensure the National Plan is implemented, is effective and supports our most vulnerable.

I congratulate Women With Disabilities Australia, People With Disability Australia and the University of New South Wales for your work on the Stop the Violence Project and for organising this event.

I send my best wishes for a successful event.

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister of Australia

22 October 2013



OPENING ADDRESS BY **THE HON MICHAELIA CASH**

MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, all - Good morning. It is an honour to be here on behalf of the Prime Minister to give the opening address to the 'Stop The Violence' National Symposium.

Donna, thank you for your welcome to country. I too would like to acknowledge the traditional owners on whose land we meet today, the Gadigal people, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

May I commence by acknowledging our special guests here today. The first is a dear friend of mine, Liz Broderick. Liz, what can I say about you other than you are amazing. You are a true champion of women's rights, and you are also a true champion in relation to stopping the violence against women and children and in particular, against women and children with disabilities. I think the fact that so many people are here today is a testament of exactly what you have achieved.

To Karin Swift, President of Women with Disabilities Australia, I am humbled by your on-going championing of the reduction of violence, in particular, in relation to women and children with disabilities. As part of the Australian delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women, earlier this year, you were one of the stand-out figures who made a huge difference, with your presence, and with what you said - Thank you Karin.

And of course, a man who does not need any introduction because he is so fantastic in this area, our Disability Discrimination Commissioner - Mr Graeme Innes - who has literally spent his life dedicated to advocating for people with disabilities, but in particular, in relation to women with disabilities. Graeme it is always fantastic to be in the same room as you. It is so good to see you.

Can I also make a very special mention of each and every one of you who have given up your time to be here today.

Carolyn said to me earlier, '*Michaelia we've got a really, really special group of people here today. They are people who are so committed to this cause that they are not just here to listen. This is a hand-picked group who are going to get down and do a lot of work today, and make sure that at the end of this National Symposium you have some fantastic policy ideas to bring back to Government.*' So, congratulations to each and every one of you. It's a recognition of your work and dedication that you have been chosen to be here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, violence against women and girls with disabilities is a serious issue. We all know that it is a basic right for women and girls to feel safe in all aspects of their lives. We all know, however, that the unfortunate truth still is, and the statistics tell us, that one in three women don't experience that basic right that so many of us take for granted.

There is the woman who dreads every weekend, waiting for her husband's alcohol-fuelled rage to drive her and her children into hiding in different parts of the house, wondering if and when they are going to be able to come out.

There is the pregnant woman who doesn't know when her boyfriend is next going to punch her.

There is the woman who is wheel-chair bound and if she falls from her chair her husband doesn't tell her carers, he doesn't take her to the doctor or the hospital and he doesn't get her checked.

There is the woman who has a disability as a direct result of her abuse. At just sixteen years old her boyfriend almost bashed her to death by repeatedly stomping and kicking her head. He beat her so badly she suffered a severe brain injury and was in in a coma for four months.

The bad news about those stories is that I didn't make them up for today. As you all know, they are real-life situations that I am merely relating to you, but which highlight why this national symposium is so very, very important. Each of those women has a different experience. The stories are different. But there is one common thread that links each and every one of those stories, and that is that those stories are completely, totally and utterly, in 2013, unacceptable.

The firm commitment of Tony Abbott our Prime Minister, and our Government, is that it is not acceptable for violence against women and children to be secreted away behind closed doors.

Violence against women must be acknowledged.

Violence against women must be addressed.

Violence against women must be eliminated.

Ladies and gentlemen, in relation to the Abbott Government's commitment in this area, it is a long-held passion of the Prime Minister, his wife Margie, and myself, that we work towards eliminating violence against women and children.

The Coalition Government's long term commitment in this area was evidenced under the former Howard Government. Many of you would know from working with the former Howard Government, we committed \$75.7 million dollars to the Women's Safety Agenda and you would remember it addressed four main priority themes.

In particular, we became a world leader in relation to the Women's Safety Agenda, with the 'Violence Against Women - Australia Says No' campaign. That really did put this particular cause front and centre in the minds of all Australians. It sent an unequivocal message to the community, and one which I really hope you have been able to build on: that violence against women and girls, and violence generally, in society, is unacceptable. We are back in government, and my pledge to you is that we will now build on what previous Coalition governments have done in this space.

I can personally assure you that you have a true champion in Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. He is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. That's a statement that I can stand up here and make. If I was you I would be saying 'Well hold on Michaelia. What do you have to actually back up that statement?' Well, let me tell you. Many people don't know that in his private life he has been a long-time supporter of The Manly Women's Centre in his electorate of Warringah.

Many of you would have heard about the 'Pollie Pedal' that our Prime Minister sets off on every year. Whilst yes, he is a dedicated cyclist and he loves every minute of this, there is a reason he actually does the 'Pollie Pedal'. It's his way of raising funds for charity - he and group of dedicated politicians have raised a lot of money for The Manly Women's Shelter. They have raised in excess of \$350,000 over the years and I'm proud to say that Margie Abbott is a formal patron of the Manly Women's Shelter. I hope this gives you some indication that it is a life-long dedication of our PM to just quietly go about ensuring that there are resources for these types of places.

In relation to the National Plan, many of you whom I had the opportunity of meeting with when I was the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary would know that I am 110 per cent committed to the implementation of the National Plan.

We are now at the end of the first phase of the National Plan. I am very excited that it is a Coalition Government that is going to be given the opportunity of launching phase two of the National Plan next year. We have made some great progress under phase one. However, there is still work to do. The Prime Minister and I are committed to working with each and every one of you to ensure that the next phase of the National Plan ensures that we take a step-up in reducing violence against women and children.

One of the areas that I am personally passionate about, and have spoken with the Prime Minister in terms of 'where do you want to see a coalition government going?' is very much in the area of primary prevention.

We all know the statistics in relation to the violence against women and children, it costs our economy \$13.6 billion dollars a year, and according to all of the analysis if we don't do something about it that figure is only going to rise. We all know the shocking statistics of violence against women and if we truly want to address this we really need to start looking at a real focus on primary prevention.

The White Ribbon Day Parliamentary Breakfast at Parliament House, which I hope to see some of you at, does a fantastic job in ensuring that people understand that women's problems are men's problems as well. Men are unfortunately, more often than not, the perpetrators of violence against women. It's wonderful to see so many men here today, because it means that you are truly committed to ensuring that this is something that stops.

In relation to White Ribbon, I was very proud that one of our election commitments is an additional 1 million dollars to The White Ribbon Campaign over four years. We believe that this is much-needed funding that will ensure that they can continue with their very, very targeted approach to ensuring that men understand it is not acceptable to be a perpetrator of violence, but also, to work with those thousands of men who have taken the pledge.

Our Prime Minister Tony Abbott took the pledge some time ago. The pledge, as he said: 'We cannot rest until we entirely eliminate violence against women. Violence is never, ever acceptable as a way of settling disputes. It is particularly unacceptable when it is employed against people who are inherently vulnerable.'

And, as we all know this a message that each Australian, but in particular, each boy and girl in Australia needs to grow up understanding. It's only when you convince the next generation that violence is unacceptable, that we will have true cultural change, and we will be so many steps closer to ensuring that we live in a society where violence against women and children is eliminated.

In relation to evidence building, I am a believer, as you all are, in evidence-based policy. The Coalition will be proudly supporting The National Centre of Excellence, which is now up and running, and in fact our Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, highlighted the NCE at a meeting with the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, just a few weeks after the election. We look forward to working with the team at the NCE to ensure that the current gap between research and practical steps is brought together, and I think that's a great step forward.

We are all here today to recognise the very particular needs of women with disabilities who experience violence. It's a fact, we all know it, that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence than other women. Many women with a disability face additional problems in accessing appropriate support, and we all know the reality is that fewer have the option of escaping violence.

We also hear, very disappointingly, of too many stories of violence within supported care and residential care facilities. Again, completely, totally and utterly unacceptable.

Karin, I know you did a great job, as I said earlier, in relation to CSW in New York earlier this year, and I know that it was because of your efforts that this topic was something that was spoken about at an international level by Australia and by an Australian delegate in Karin, and I truly believe that this has well and truly raised the profile of this internationally. So again, well done Karin!

I want to assure you that the Government is very proud of the work that each and every one of you do in the non-governmental sector to ensure that there is a reduction, and hopefully eventually, a complete elimination of violence against women and children, and in particular, violence against women with disabilities.

I don't underestimate how hard it is for each and every one of you, as it is always the way in this space, there is always a limited pool of resources, but please don't underestimate the work you do. Please don't underestimate the value of that work for us as your politicians, when formulating policy that will make a real difference in the lives of effected women.

In closing I would like to read, a message from the Prime Minister, who could not be with us today.

'Violence against women and girls is utterly unacceptable. It is unacceptable in Australia and unacceptable across the world.

The Stop the Violence National Symposium is confronting the serious issue of violence against women and girls. In particular it will focus on confronting violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The Symposium is also promoting the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

I am working with my colleague and Minister Assisting for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, to ensure the National Plan is implemented, is effective and supports our most vulnerable.

I congratulate Women With Disabilities Australia, People With Disability Australia and the University of New South Wales for your work on the Stop the Violence Project and for organising this event.

I send my best wishes for a successful event.'

And on that note again, it is an honour and it is a privilege for me to be here today and to have been given this very, very humbling opportunity to open your conference. Enjoy the day.



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY **MS ELIZABETH BRODERICK**

PROJECT STEERING GROUP CHAIR AND SEX DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Thank you so much, Senator Cash for coming along today, for showing such deep commitment to the work that is happening here. Just like you, all of us here feel deeply about combating violence against women with disabilities. It is great to have your support and the Prime Minister's support for the initiatives, the evidence gathering and the sharing of best practice that will happen throughout the day today, and I really look forward to continuing to work with you over the next period on these really important issues.

I want to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nationa and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

I wish to also acknowledge the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Mitch Fifield, who sends his sincere apologies and best wishes for the event. I know from his work, while in opposition, that he is a strong supporter of strategies to ensure that people with disability, and particularly women and girls can enjoy the same rights as everyone else and I know Graeme Innes would support me in saying what a strong supporter he is in this particular area because as we know women and girls with disability face considerable discrimination and violence across all regions of the world, not just here in Australia. It was really brought home to me just in the last couple of weeks when I went to the World Bank. I sit on their Gender Advisory Board and we have been looking once again at the key issue of violence against women and girls and particularly women with disabilities. I was interested to learn that violence against women and girls is at epidemic levels across the world today. For the first time the number of women and girls living with violence is higher than the number of malnourished people in the world. So, most importantly, also at the global level, it is identified that violence against women and girls is probably the major impediment to them contributing fully to society, to improvements in society and improvements in our economy.

So we deeply care about the human rights case here today. But if that is not enough to get you over the line, the fact is that all women should have the right to contribute fully to a positive society – a society that benefits everyone and, indeed, a vibrant and strong economy.

That is the main message, and the message that we will hear today, and that is why it is so important to take the violence out of the private sphere and put it right up on the public agenda. That is what we are doing today; by understanding the evidence base, by actually starting to get the hard data out into the public sphere we can debate it, we can deliberate and share about leading strategies to take this forward.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability in its recent review of Australia, recommended in its Concluding Observations that "Australia include a more comprehensive consideration of women with disabilities in public programs and policies on the prevention of gender based violence, particularly so as to ensure access for women with disabilities to an effective integrated response system". I think that is what we found in the work that we have done and the discussions that we have had up until now. There is good work being done, but it is done in pockets, and we need to bring that together, and we need to ensure that it is part of the mainstream service delivery response in Australia for women affected by violence.

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children recognises that. The National Plan focuses on primary prevention. It is great to hear the Minister talk about a focus on primary prevention. But the National Plan also recognises that women and girls with disabilities experience higher levels of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, that they have high levels of unmet needs in terms of access to

domestic violence and sexual assault services and related community support services. Further, increasing the community's understanding of the complexity and nature of these issue and how they play out for women with disabilities is also very important. So what we need is some targeted measures to ensure that women with disabilities can participate fully and equally in Australian society, that they can enjoy their human rights to the same extent as everyone else.

The Stop the Violence Project is overseen by Women With Disabilities Australia, People with Disability Australia and University of New South Wales.

In particular I want to acknowledge Karin and Carolyn and all the amazing women from WWDA who are here today and I have to absolutely agree with the Minister. It is so wonderful when I go into CSW each year and I travel with representatives from WWDA, just what powerful advocates you are on the global stage. It is Australia that has helped put these issues on the global agenda and I feel so very proud about that.

Therese Sands of People with Disability Australia who is here with us has done such great work from that organisation. Also, the University of New South Wales has done an amazing job in gathering the evidence, in developing the survey and engaging with stakeholders and making sure that today the right people are in the room.

As Chair of the Steering Group, I want to welcome you all to the Symposium today. I feel very honoured to be a part of this and I know that this is just the beginning of the conversation and action that will take place. Today we will come together, we will share the best practice, we will collaborate across sectors and identify measures for reform. And I look forward to engaging in that discussion with everyone today.



MESSAGE FROM MS KARIN SWIFT

PRESIDENT OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AUSTRALIA

I would like to start by reminding you that Australia is a Member State of the United Nations. Our country is a signatory to seven core international treaties and several other instruments that create clear obligations in relation to gender equality and disability rights. By signing and ratifying these international agreements, Australia has committed to take all measures, including targeted, gender-specific measures to ensure that women and girls with disabilities can realise and experience their rights and freedoms. However, let us be very clear: Australia has failed to ensure women and girls with disabilities benefit from these provisions and commitments. Instead, systemic prejudice, discrimination, apathy and indifference continues to result in widespread denial, and violation of, our most basic rights and freedoms – including our right to live free from violence.

Although we experience many of the same forms of violence that all women experience, when gender and disability intersect, violence has unique causes, takes on unique forms and results in unique consequences.¹ We also experience forms of violence that are particular to our situation of social disadvantage, cultural devaluation and increased dependency on others. Poverty, race, ethnicity, religion, language and other identity status or life experiences can further increase our risk of violence.² Compared to non-disabled women, we experience violence at significantly

higher rates, more frequently, for longer, in more ways, and by more perpetrators, yet policies, programs and services for us either do not exist, are extremely limited, or simply just exclude us.³

We experience alarmingly high rates of multiple forms of violence from a range of perpetrators, including physical, psychological and sexual violence; financial abuse, neglect, social isolation, entrapment, degradation, trafficking, detention, forced sterilisation and psychiatric treatment, forced contraception and forced abortion, denial of health care, including exclusion from sexual and reproductive health care services, to name just a few.⁴

We are twice as likely to experience domestic/family violence as non-disabled women, are likely to experience this violence over a longer period of time and suffer more serious injuries as a result.⁵ We are raped and sexually assaulted at a rate of at least two times greater than other women.⁶ More than 70 per cent of us have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in our lives.⁷ More than a quarter of rape cases reported by females in Australia are perpetrated against women with disabilities.⁸ And it is estimated that between 50 - 70 per cent of women with psychosocial disabilities in Australia have experienced past physical or sexual abuse, including child sexual assault.⁹ For example, a recent Victorian study

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- 1 Frohmader, C. & Ortoleva, S. (2013) *The Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities: Issues Paper.*, Prepared for the ICPD Beyond 14 International Conference on Human Rights, The Hague, Available online at: http://www.wwda.org.au/issues_paper_srr_women_and_girls_with_disabilities_final.pdf.
 - 2 Dowse, L., Soldatic, K., Didi, A., Frohmader, C. and van Toorn, G. (2013) *Stop the Violence: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia. Background Paper.* Hobart: Women with Disabilities Australia.
 - 3 Frohmader, C. (2011) *Submission to the UN Analytical Study on Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities*, Prepared for Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), <http://www.wwda.org.au/WWDASubUNStudyViolenceWWDDec2011.pdf>.
 - 4 Frohmader, C. & Ortoleva, S. (2013) OpCit., International Network of Women with Disabilities (2011) *Violence Against Women with Disabilities*. Barbara Faye Waxman Fiduccia Papers on Women and Girls with Disabilities, Center for Women Policy Studies.
 - 5 National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 'Background Paper to Time For Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009–2021' (Background Paper, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, March 2009).
 - 6 See for eg: United Nations General Assembly (2012) *Thematic study on the issue of violence against women and girls and disability, Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN Doc. A/HRC/20/5; See also: WWDA (2007b) 'Forgotten Sisters - A global review of violence against women with disabilities', WWDA, Rosny Park, Tasmania.
 - 7 Stimpson & Best; cited in Elman, A. (2005) *Confronting the Sexual Abuse of Women with Disabilities*. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
 - 8 See for eg: Reported from Victorian study in Frohmader, C. (2011) OpCit.

found that 45 per cent of women in psychiatric hospitals had been sexually assaulted, 67 per cent had been sexually harassed and 85 per cent felt unsafe.¹⁰

Women and girls with disabilities who live in institutions experience, and are at significant risk of violence. For many, violence is a day to day reality of their lives and frequently involves sustained and multiple episodes. Yet violence perpetrated against women and girls with disabilities in institutions is rarely characterised as domestic violence and rarely are domestic violence related interventions deployed to deal with this type of violence.¹¹

For many women with disabilities in Australia, identification and recognition that violence in their lives is a problem or a crime remains a significant issue. They may have difficulties in recognising, defining and describing the violence; have limited awareness of strategies to prevent and manage it; and lack the confidence to seek help and support. Those who do seek support often find themselves on a referral roundabout without ever finding a pathway to safety.¹² Many women with disabilities remain in violent and abusive relationships and environments simply because they have no other option.

Typically, most women with disabilities do not report the violence perpetrated against them. We often lack access to legal protection, and law enforcement officials and the legal community are ill-equipped to address the violence. Our testimony is often not viewed as credible by the courts; and we are not privy to the same information available to non-disabled women. The lack of appropriate, available, accessible and affordable services, programs and support is a major factor that increases and contributes to violence against us.

Successive Australian Governments have conceded that violence against women with disabilities in Australia is 'widespread'; that we are extraordinarily vulnerable to violence and abuse, and that we experience significant barriers in accessing services and support. Yet violence against women and girls with disabilities still remains largely outside the public debate and policy responses to violence against women. We therefore urge the newly elected Abbott Government to take up the recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities without delay, and we look forward to engaging with the Government on their implementation.

The primary response to addressing violence against women in Australia, including women with disabilities, is through the twelve year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and its National and Jurisdictional Implementation Plans. However, in relation to addressing violence against women and girls with disabilities, the National Plan has limitations, in that there is little emphasis on girls with disabilities, it focuses only on domestic/family violence and sexual assault and fails to address the multiple forms of violence that women and girls with disabilities experience. In addition, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are included in the National Plan and other mainstream strategies, there are no clear provisions which address violence and abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disabilities, and this remains an unaddressed area of public policy and service provision. A similar situation exists for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women with disabilities.

The *Stop the Violence Project* (STVP), which has brought us together here today, is a positive first step in laying the groundwork for improved service

9 Victorian Women and Mental Health Network, *Nowhere to be Safe: Women's Experiences of Mixed-Sex Psychiatric Wards* (Report, April 2008) pp. 4-5.

10 Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council, *Zero Tolerance for Sexual Assault: A Safe Admission for Women* (2013).

11 Frohmader, C. & Swift, K. (2012) Opening minds & opening doors: Reconceptualising 'domestic violence' to be inclusive of women with disabilities in institutions. *CDFVRe@der*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 7-8. Available at: <http://www.noviolence.com.au/public/reader/readerdec2012.pdf>.

12 Dowse, L. et al. OpCit.

provision for women and girls with disabilities who are experiencing, or at risk of violence. It is one of a number of projects funded by the Commonwealth Government under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan). The STVP is overseen by Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), the peak non-government organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia and implemented in conjunction with the University of New South Wales and People with Disabilities Australia.

The STVP emerged from WWDA's long standing commitment to addressing one of the most pressing issues for its membership: violence against women and girls with disabilities in Australia. The objective of the STVP is to identify structural issues to improve service responses to women and girls with disabilities experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence. It investigates and identifies gaps and good practice models for improvement of services. Through stakeholder engagement, consultations and a nation-wide survey, the project lays the groundwork for improved service provision by building an evidence base for future reforms so that the service system is more responsive to the needs of women and girls with disabilities who are affected by violence. The evidence gathered from the STVP are presented and discussed at the National Symposium.

The challenge however, will be to ensure that this initiative is adequately resourced and sustained through the life of the National Plan. We must now ensure implementation, coordination and monitoring of the key reforms the STVP has identified, and further develop initiatives that address the multiple forms of violence that women and girls with disabilities experience.

I would like to take this opportunity as President of WWDA, to pay tribute to our CEO, Carolyn Frohmader, who for more than 16 years has worked tirelessly to promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities, particularly their right to bodily integrity and to live free from violence, exploitation and abuse. It would be remiss of me as WWDA President, not to publicly state that WWDA is an organisation of only one paid employee – Carolyn – and we carry out our critically acclaimed work nationally and internationally on a total operating budget of only \$163,000 per year. I thank Carolyn for the dedication, commitment and incredibly long hours she has worked over many years to advance the rights and freedoms of women and girls with disabilities.

Thank you and I hope that we can all engage with the process and work together with us to Stop the Violence.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

The Stop the Violence National Symposium on Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities was held on Friday 25 October 2013 at the Australian Human Rights Commission in Sydney. The National Symposium was attended by 58 participants including women with disabilities, key stakeholders and decision makers in the government and non-government sector, as well as experts and academics working in the field of disability and violence against women.

The National Symposium, the first of its kind to be conducted in Australia, was designed to foster active participation and discussions to identify good policy and practice measures for reform across different sectors so that women and girls with disabilities can escape violence and be able to live with dignity and respect, participating fully and equally in Australian society.

The National Symposium consisted of two plenary and panel discussion sessions followed by eight simultaneous working group discussions which addressed key emerging issues and mechanisms for directing good policy and practice emerging from the project followed by presentations and discussions at a plenary session. These issues, as set out in the *Stop the Violence: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia. Discussion Paper* included:

- Information, Education and Capacity Building for Women and Girls with Disabilities;
- Awareness Raising for the Broader Community;
- Education and Training for Service Providers;
- Service Sector Development and Reform;
- Legislation, National Agreements and Policy Frameworks;
- Evidence Gathering, Research and Development;
- Establishment and Development of the Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities; and
- Establishment of a National Expert Panel on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities;

Further information about the National Symposium, including the *Stop the Violence: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia. Background Paper*, the *Stop the Violence: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia. Discussion Paper*, presentation podcasts and transcripts and including this Report of Proceedings and Outcomes are available on the STVP website www.stvp.org.au

PROGRAM

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER 2013

TIME	SESSION
9:30am	Registration
10:00am	Welcome to the country Ms Donna Ingram, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
10:05am	Opening Address Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
10:20am	Introductory Remarks and Goals for the Day Ms Elizabeth Broderick, Project Steering Group Chair and Sex Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC
10:25am	Plenary 1: Key Issues in Violence and Women & Girls with Disabilities Chair: Ms Elizabeth Broderick, PSG Chair & Sex Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC Introduction to the Issue: Ms Karin Swift, President, WWDA
10:35am	Panel Discussion: Ms Gayle Rankin, Chairperson, First Peoples Disability Network, South Australia Ms Nihal Iscel, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre, Western Australia Ms Janice Slattery, Member, Reinforce Self-Advocacy, Victoria Ms Margie Charlesworth, Vice-President, WWDA
10:55am	Discussion from the floor
11:10am	Break
11:30am	Plenary 2: Challenges and Opportunities for Change Chair: Mr Graeme Innes, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC Introduction to the Issues: Mr Graeme Innes, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC
11:40am	Panel Discussion: Ms Debbie Kilroy, CEO, Sisters Inside Dr Gabrielle Drake, Lecturer, University of Western Sydney Dr Leanne Dowse, Senior Researcher STVP, University of New South Wales
12:00pm	Discussion from the floor
12:15pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Working Group Session Group 1: Information, Education and Capacity Building for Women and Girls with Disabilities Group 2: Awareness Raising for the Broader Community Group 3: Education and Training for Service Providers Group 4: Service Sector Development and Reform Group 5: Legislation, National Agreements and Policy Frameworks Group 6: Evidence Gathering, Research and Development Group 7: Establishment and Development of the Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities Group 8: Establishment of a National Expert Panel on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities
2:15pm	Break
2:25pm	Plenary: Feedback from Groups
4:10pm	Summary
4:25pm	Communiqué from the Symposium Ms Therese Sands, PWDA
4:35pm	Closing Remarks Ms Elizabeth Broderick, Project Steering Group Chair and Sex Discrimination Commissioner, AHRC
4:45pm	Close

PLENARY 1

KEY ISSUES IN VIOLENCE AND WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

ELIZABETH BRODERICK – CHAIR

Sex Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission chaired the first panel discussion of the National Symposium on key issues in violence against women and girls with disabilities.

KARIN SWIFT – INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUES

The President of WWDA, Karen provided an introduction to the issues of violence against women and girls with disabilities in Australia. Karin highlighted the systemic prejudices, discrimination, apathy and indifference which continue to result in widespread denial and violation of basic rights and freedoms of women and girls with disabilities to live free from violence. She explained that women and girls with disabilities experienced alarmingly high rates of multiple forms of violence from a range of perpetrators, including physical, psychological and sexual violence; financial abuse, neglect, social isolation, entrapment, degradation, trafficking, detention, forced sterilisation and psychiatric treatment, forced contraception and forced abortion, denial of health care, including exclusion from sexual and reproductive health care services. Karin expressed regret at Australia's failure to ensure that women and girls with disabilities benefit from the provisions and commitments of international treaties and instruments that their country it is party to, and called on the Government to implement adequately resourced and sustained initiatives that address the multiple forms of violence that women and girls with disabilities experience.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Gayle Rankine, a Ngarrindjeri woman from South Australia, Gayle is the Chairperson of First Peoples Disability Network (Australia). Gayle's presentation highlighted her personal experiences of violence and her regret that violence is a norm in Australian society in 2013. She identified the need to educate men on issues of violence against women in order for men to understand and acknowledge that it is not culturally acceptable to perpetrate violence against women and girls. Also of concern Gayle cited high rates of sexual abuse within institutions and the lack of support networks in remote communities across Australia.

Nihal Iscel is the Manager of Advocacy Services at the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC) in Western Australia. Nihal explained that many women with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds experiencing violence encountered barriers in accessing services due to language issues and lack of knowledge of available services. Nihal identified that in some cultural contexts disability is perceived negatively and women with disabilities are devalued, resulting in their exploitation. She highlighted the need for increased awareness among women and girls with disabilities from CALD communities about resources and services that could assist them to escape from violence and exploitation. She called on the Government to provide additional resources to address this need.

Janice Slattery is from Reinforce self-advocacy group in Melbourne and describes herself as a wife, self-advocate, and a woman with an intellectual disability. Janice highlighted her own personal experiences and the long time it took for people to accept that a woman with an intellectual disability can be a strong, independent person, able to take care of herself. She explained that society often viewed such women as exploitable and emphasised the need for advocacy so that the community viewed women with intellectual disabilities also as people having equal rights.

Margie Charlesworth is Vice-President of WWDA. Her presentation highlighted the ways women with communication disabilities are stripped of their legal capacity and denied justice on the basis that if their words are unclear they should not be trusted. Margie called for the development of mechanisms that can enable women and girls with communication issues to have equal access to the justice system and equal recognition before the law. She also highlighted the need to educate women and girls with communication difficulties in ways to realise their rights, to have their voices heard and their rights upheld.

DISCUSSION

The presentations from the panel members were followed by clarifications, comments and discussions from the floor which highlighted:

- the lack of data collection on violence against women with disabilities in Indigenous communities; and
- the issue of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and the complexities it raised to recognition as a disability, and its impacts on mothers.

PLENARY 2 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

GRAEME INNES – CHAIR AND INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUES

Disability Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission chaired the second panel discussion and provided an introduction on the challenges and opportunities for change, outlining the gaps in the current legislative, policy and service frameworks that impact on violence prevention and response for women and girls with disabilities. He explained that these gaps arise because the intersection between gender and disability is generally not taken into account in legislative and policy frameworks, and because legislative and policy frameworks generally lack a human rights context in relation to the human rights treaties ratified by Australia. This effectively meant that violence prevention and response strategies are piecemeal, inconsistent and often did not include protections and responses for women and girls with disabilities. Graeme also suggested that, as had been discussed in the Access to Justice consultations, the use of different definitions of what constitutes 'violence' across different jurisdictions, and the focus of the Disability Service Standards and the NDIS Act on 'abuse and neglect' rather than 'violence,' tended to minimise the severity of crimes perpetrated against people with disabilities and trivialised serious crimes to 'administrative infringements' or 'management issues'.

Debbie Kilroy is a former prisoner and the CEO of Sisters Inside - an independent community organisation in Brisbane that advocates for the human rights of criminalised women. Debbie's presentation highlighted the systemic violence experienced by women in prisons and in residential care facilities. She suggested that law and policy alone cannot address violence against women as often laws designed to protect women also lead to their increased arrests, based on their

'reactive violence' to domestic abuse situations. This results in a false picture in data that seem to suggest that women are becoming more violent. She also spoke about the difficulties faced by women with disabilities within the prison system as they are not allowed access to their carers.

Gabrielle Drake is a lecturer in Social Work at the University of Western Sydney. In her presentation, Gabrielle highlighted the challenges faced by women with disabilities who live in boarding houses and psychiatric institutions. She highlighted that some women with disabilities prefer to live on the streets rather than face the violence and intimidation experienced in some boarding houses. Gabrielle also explained the need for researchers to address definitions of 'homelessness' and 'houselessness' in Australia and emphasised the importance of allowing women with disabilities to set the research agenda and for other researchers to work as co-researchers to identify targeted strategies to stop violence against women with disabilities.

Leanne Dowse is an academic and researcher in Social Research and Policy at the University of New South Wales and leader of the Stop the Violence Project team at UNSW. Leanne's presentation outlined the evidence gathering process for the STVP and highlighted that this was the first of its kind in Australia. Leanne suggested that given the high response rate to the national survey from across all jurisdictions and sectors, it provides findings that are representative and significant nationally. The evidence suggests a lack of a common, shared understanding of good policy and practice service provision to address issues of violence against women and girls with disabilities. She also highlighted the six key areas that were identified through the research as requiring attention, including recognising violence, responding to violence, inclusion and participation of women with disabilities, sector development, cross-sector collaboration and data capture and use. Leanne also explained that even though there are pockets of good policy and practice, overall it appears that there is an inadequate service response in Australia to issues of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

DISCUSSION

The presentations from the panel members were followed by questions and discussions from the floor. The discussions centred on:

- structural and systemic barriers which women with disabilities face, particularly around pursuing appropriate opportunities and action for redress;
- increased susceptibility to violence due to confluence of disability discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion;
- additional issues women with disabilities face due to housing inaccessibility, relationships of support within varying housing arrangements such as supported housing and accommodation, group homes, boarding houses, etc.; homelessness and much more; and
- the role of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the development of mechanisms within the scheme to recognise the high degree of susceptibility to violence from a range of parties for women with disabilities.

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

The participants of the National Symposium were pre-assigned to eight Working Groups, representing eight key areas for enhancing good policy and practice emerging from the evidence base gathered for the Stop the Violence Project. The eight areas were:

- Group 1** Information, Education and Capacity Building for Women and Girls with Disabilities
- Group 2** Awareness Raising for the Broader Community
- Group 3** Education and Training for Service Providers
- Group 4** Service Sector Development and Reform
- Group 5** Legislation, National Agreements and Policy Frameworks
- Group 6** Evidence Gathering, Research and Development
- Group 7** Establishing and Development of a Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities
- Group 8** Establishment of a National Expert Panel on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities.

The Working Group discussions were moderated by a Chair assigned to each group, who was assisted by a scribe to capture the discussions and agreed final statements from the groups. Each group presented their suggested discussions and recommendations for action to the Symposium for discussion and agreement.

The focus of the National Symposium was on the outcomes of the research, so not all aspects of the very rich discussions in the Working Groups could be incorporated into key areas for action for this report. This discussion demonstrated the enthusiasm of participants to engage fully with and offer feedback on the materials. The discussions provided one of the first opportunities for a very diverse group of experts to come together to discuss issues relevant to violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The following section presents the Principles/ Mechanisms, Strategies and Possible Areas of Action identified and debated by the Working Groups and agreed to in the Symposium summary discussion.

OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A synthesis of the survey findings, consultations with women with disabilities, research literature and legislative and policy mapping resulted in six key thematic areas plus two possible future mechanisms to support the development of good policy and the provision of good practice in service provision to address and prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

AREA 1 INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

PRINCIPLE

Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local governments provide enabling environments so that women and girls with disabilities are empowered to identify, disclose, substantiate and escape from violence.

STRATEGIES

- 1.A Women and girls with disabilities are provided support to be informed and educated, within a human rights framework, to recognise violence perpetrated against them, including the types and extent of this violence.
- 1.B Women with disabilities and their organisations, groups and networks are supported to promote appropriate policy and practice responses to all forms of violence perpetrated against them across relevant health, human and justice contexts.
- 1.C In addition to mainstream supports, specific support and information addresses education and capacity

building for particularly at risk groups including Indigenous women with disabilities; CALD women with disabilities; women with disabilities who reside in congregate settings, including supported accommodation, mental health facilities, disability and aged-care facilities and correctional settings.

- 1.D Current disability services policy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) as it is progressively introduced, identifies violence against women and girls with disabilities as a priority at the level of individual service provider organisations.
- 1.E Women and girls with disabilities take part in relevant human rights forums as UN delegates.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 1.1 Provide human rights education and training for women and girls with disabilities at national, state/territory, regional and local levels so that women and girls with disabilities are informed and educated to recognise what constitutes violence, including the types and extent of violence perpetrated against them.
- 1.2 Develop capacity of individuals and of disabled women's organisations, groups and networks to address all forms of violence perpetrated against them. This could be achieved through a National Women With Disabilities Grants Program that provides funding for activities that respond to the particular needs and circumstances of women and girls with disabilities and ensure participation at all levels of decision making and at all stages of the designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and services affecting women and girls with disabilities.

- 1.3 Build the capacity of WWDA by reviewing and increasing annual funding (\$168,000) provided by the Australian Government including staffing levels (1 EFT).
- 1.4 Develop specific information, education and capacity building strategies for Indigenous women with disabilities, CALD women with disabilities, and women with disabilities in institutions.
- 1.5 A national database of accessible crisis accommodation services is developed, which details levels of accessibility for women with disabilities, (and/or women with children with disabilities) experiencing or at risk of violence.
- 1.6 The National Centre for Excellence includes representation of women with disabilities on its governance and advisory structures.
- 1.7 Representative organisations are supported and resourced on an ongoing formal basis to provide delegates with information and material to assist women with disabilities undertaking systemic advocacy work within Australia and internationally.

AREA 2 AWARENESS RAISING FOR THE BROADER COMMUNITY

PRINCIPLE

The rights of all women and girls with disabilities to live free from violence and the fear of violence in all aspects of their lives are understood by the broader community.

STRATEGIES

- 2.A Universal, targeted and sustained community campaigns raise awareness of the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and are conducted to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities before it occurs.
- 2.B Awareness campaigns to highlight that perpetration of violence against women and girls with disabilities is a crime and to incorporate information on pathways to safety as part of the campaign.
- 2.C Campaign messages and information are disseminated in formats that are inclusive of and accessible to women with disabilities experiencing or at risk of violence.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 2.1 All policies and practices need to emphasise equality as a general principle.
- 2.2 Effective awareness raising campaigns would lead to increased demand for existing services. Therefore, the services need to be adequately resourced to ensure that pathways to safety are available.

- 2.3 Awareness raising campaigns should piggy-back on state/territory prevention media campaigns, including social media marketing campaigns. They should also include images of diversity caveat (for example, CALD and Indigenous) and intended and unintended consequences.
- 2.4 The National Foundation on the Prevention of Violence Against Women to include prevention work specific to violence against women with disabilities.

AREA 3 EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

PRINCIPLE

Organisations across all relevant service sectors are supported to work within a human rights framework which treats all clients with dignity and respect, recognises the presence of violence in the lives of women with disability, and enables all staff to receive induction and training that is tailored to their position around intersecting issues of violence, gender and disability.

STRATEGIES

- 3.A Organisations across all relevant service sectors undertake education and training to foster a culture of understanding and recognition of violence against women and girls with disabilities and use this understanding to inform their strategic approach to capacity building.
- 3.B Competency based training on human rights and the intersection of disability, gender and violence provided for personnel working within the disability service sector.
- 3.C Workforce training includes consideration of the specific intersectional experiences of disability, gender and violence, in the context of Indigeneity, cultural diversity, and other dimensions of social disadvantage.
- 3.D Justice and legal workforce training be strengthened to recognise and support disclosure and redress particularly in relation to issues of family and domestic violence.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 3.1 Health Workforce Australia works with professional health industry bodies to develop and implement disability, gender and human rights specific curriculum components to assist in the training of health practitioners.
- 3.2 Core training units that can be reorganised and utilised to develop a skills set around gender-based violence against women with disabilities could be developed under the Industry Skills Council.
- 3.3 All front line personnel working within the National Disability Insurance Scheme, particularly local area coordinators and planners be required by the National Disability Insurance Agency to undertake professional training on human rights and the intersection of disability, gender and violence.
- 3.4 Staff training programs and cross sector collaborative frameworks are built into quality assurance and assessment systems established federally under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and in line with National Disability Standards.
- 3.5 Family/Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Training Programs for professionals, including police, working in the family law system (such as the AVERT Family Violence Training Program and the Family Law Detection of Overall Risk Screen (DOORS) Framework) could be strengthened by including information on gender, disability and violence in all components, including the 'Responding to Diversity' component.

AREA 4 SERVICE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM

PRINCIPLE

All government, community and for-profit service sectors are developed to be inclusive of women and girls with disabilities and their concerns.

STRATEGIES

- 4.A Women with disabilities perform a leadership role in governance and advisory, policy and service structures, including decisions concerning service sector development and reform.
- 4.B Services work together in bringing about a change in culture and attitudes within organisations, and use this process to drive improvements to policies, protocols and practices in responding to violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- 4.C When policies and procedures are developed, specific consideration is given to addressing the diverse needs and circumstances of women and girls with disabilities.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 4.1 Establish clear measurable targets or quotas for women with disabilities in leadership positions across government, community and for-profit sectors, ensuring that organisations and participants are sufficiently resourced to enact this leadership.
- 4.2 Mandatory requirement of representation of women with disabilities in service-level governance and advisory of all services operating under National Disability Insurance Scheme regulatory framework.

AREA 5 LEGISLATION, NATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

PRINCIPLE

Legislation, national agreements and policy are directed within a human rights framework so that they actively prevent violence; enact legislative responses that respond effectively to violence; force service systems to respond effectively to varying forms of violence; prevent further harm following entry into the service system; and enable women with disabilities to respond to violence perpetrated against them as active agents.

STRATEGIES

- 5.A Commonwealth/State/Territory legislation gives effect to Australia's obligations under ratified human rights treaties.
- 5.B Policy frameworks facilitate a co-ordinated cross-sector approach across disability and violence against women sectors.
- 5.C Reporting measures to track progress on violence against women and girls with disabilities are included in relevant Implementation Plans and their jurisdictional operationalisation against for example the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* which commits all Australian governments to continue to consider measures to reduce violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability through all mainstream and disability-specific policies, programs and services over the life of the strategy.
- 5.D Justice sector facilitates access for women and girls with disabilities experiencing or at risk of violence.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 5.1 Commonwealth/State/Territory legislation be reviewed to recognise all forms of violence against women and girls perpetrated in all settings, including institutional and congregate care settings, recognise the right of people with disabilities to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- 5.2 Commonwealth/State/Territory legislation on family law and domestic and family violence acknowledge the particular impact of domestic and family violence on marginalised and vulnerable groups of people with disabilities, including Indigenous persons, LGBTQI persons, those from a CALD background, and older persons.
- 5.3 Commonwealth/State/Territory Family/ Domestic Violence Legislation could contain consistent, comprehensive definition of family/domestic violence which includes the broadest possible definition of acts of family violence and relationships within which family violence occurs.
- 5.4 COAG agrees on three key performance measures that state governments report on, as required by relevant Implementation Plans established in each jurisdiction under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*. Performance measures should pertain to quality of life outcomes, given that these outcomes are also indicative of overall vulnerability to violence, (for example, education, active labour market participation, income).

AREA 6 EVIDENCE GATHERING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

PRINCIPLE

National data definitions and collection methods capture the forms, types and frequency of violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities, and are utilised to promote research and development. Definitions of violence should reflect those set out in International Human Rights Treaties, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

STRATEGIES

- 6.A Violence against women and girls with disabilities is recognised as a key area for future research and policy development. This research agenda could be situated and developed within the National Centre for Excellence, and would benefit from partnership agreements with disability and violence sector organisations and other national data collection agencies.
- 6.B Data on the use of relevant services by women and girls with disabilities faced with violence is collected, collated and made available to inform future policy work for strategic improvement of services.
- 6.C A National Women with Disabilities Expert Panel with diverse representation of women with disabilities be established to inform relevant agencies on the development of data collection strategies across all pertinent areas of policy and service delivery.
- 6.D Information on violence against women and girls with disabilities in Australia is incorporated in reporting to human rights treaty bodies, universal periodic reviews, reports and recommendations of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, reporting to special rapporteurs, and within the post-2015 development framework.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 6.1 The National Centre of Excellence develops the National Research Agenda and includes as a priority research area, addressing violence against women and girls with disabilities. This includes prioritising initiatives which are informed by the findings and outcomes of the Stop the Violence Project and which improve policy and integrated service delivery in preventing and responding to, violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- 6.2 Existing service funding arrangements are restructured to enable the collection, collation and availability of data on the use of relevant services by women and girls with disabilities faced with violence for the purposes of service development.
- 6.3 Relevant national surveys such as the *National Community Attitudes Survey* (NCAS) and the *National Personal Safety Survey* (PSS) include disability and gender specific indicators and provide disaggregated data in reporting.
- 6.4 The *National Gender Equality Indicators Australia* are strengthened by including disaggregated reporting and by developing specific disability indicators for each of the six key domains (Economic security, Education, Health, Work and family balance, Safety and justice, and Democracy, governance and citizenship).
- 6.5 A national women with disabilities Expert Panel is established and resourced to advise the ABS on future development of the *National Personal Safety Survey* and the *National Community Attitudes Survey* and other relevant national, State/Territory data collection processes.

- 6.6 Recognising, responding to, and preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities is integrated throughout the National Evaluation Framework to be developed for the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. Women with disabilities are represented on any advisory/reference structures established to oversee development of the National Evaluation Framework.
- 6.7 As part of the review of the National Disability Agreement, agreement from Council of Australian Governments is sought that data on violence experienced by people with disabilities be collected by all disability services, and this data be disaggregated according to gender, context where violence occurred, and the perpetrator of violence.
- 6.8 The National Disability Strategy could pick up indicators of violence against people with disability that are disaggregated according to gender, context where violence occurred, and the perpetrator of violence. The National Disability Strategy includes indicators of violence against people with disability that are disaggregated according to gender, context where violence occurred, and the perpetrator of violence.

AREA 7 ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIRTUAL CENTRE FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

MECHANISM

Symposium participants proposed that a *Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities* be established to function as an online 'one stop' resource designed to serve and meet the needs of a wide range of users, including women with disabilities; policymakers; front line service providers; researchers; program developers; legislators; academics; teachers; students; the broader community and more. It would have international applicability and serve as model for other countries in their efforts to promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation as part of Australia's international human rights obligations. The *Virtual Centre* would foster and support evidence-based approaches to more efficiently and effectively design, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls with disabilities.

STRATEGIES

- 7.A The *Virtual Centre* could encompass the following elements:
- Principles and guidelines for good practice approaches to violence against women and girls with disabilities;
 - Promising and/or good practice models and approaches in legislation, policy, program and service responses;
 - Leading tools and evidence on what works to address violence against women and girls with disabilities;

- A compendium of contemporary resource materials available worldwide;
 - Models, responses and approaches to support engagement and participation of women and girls with disabilities;
 - A repository of historical information and resources;
 - Human rights conventions, instruments, declarations and reference materials relating to gender, disability, violence and intersectionality;
 - Scholarly, academic, and other research sources;
 - Sources of expertise;
 - Interactive spaces for communication and collaboration; and
 - The UN Knowledge Centre on Violence Against Women is a model with international standing on which the Virtual Centre could be modelled.
- 7.B To ensure continued development, longevity and sustainability, the *Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities* could be housed within the National Centre of Excellence, supported by a technical, administrative and support team that maintains and updates the Virtual Centre, overseen by an Expert Panel made up of women with disabilities and selected key stakeholders. The Virtual Centre could be developed utilising a Content Management System (CMS) platform, with site accessibility being a key principle in design and usability.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 7.1 Map the range of public, private and community organisations that could act as partners and potential partners in the development and sustainability of the Virtual Centre (for example, the National Centre for Excellence, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, the National Disability Insurance Agency, and the National Disability Research Agenda).
- 7.2 Explore State/Territory governments' contribution to the establishment of the Virtual Centre.
- 7.3 The National Centre for Excellence considers embedding the Virtual Centre within its future research priorities (write formally to the boards of the *National Centre for Excellence, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and the National Disability Insurance Agency* to promote the concept).
- 7.4 Explore opportunities to resource the sourcing of the Virtual Centre under the second stage of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and through the NDIS workforce development fund.
- 7.5 Ensure that women with disabilities drive the development of the Virtual Centre, taking leadership roles within advisory and governance structures, and that the Centre remains accessible to women with disabilities in all required formats.

AREA 8 ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES EXPERT PANEL ON THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

MECHANISM

A National Women with Disabilities Expert Panel on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities, including representation of women with disabilities, could provide high level strategic direction to build an effective, integrated legislative, policy, program and service response to address and prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities. It could:

- develop, drive and monitor the key strategies for action under the six key areas of reform;
- have a direct link to relevant national reference groups and panels such as the previous government's National Plan Implementation Panel (NPIP) and the National Disability Strategy Implementation Reference Group (NDSIRG);
- establish priority key strategies for reform;
- determine responsibility and resource implications for the key strategies for reform; and
- provide advice on data collection.

STRATEGY

- 8.A An appropriate national expert panel could be appointed under the second stage of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* to provide high level strategic direction to build an effective, integrated legislative, policy, program and service response to address and prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities (for example, under the former government's NPIP).

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ACTION

- 8.1 The National Disability Strategy (NDS) pick up indicators of violence against people with disability that are disaggregated according to gender, context where violence occurred, and the perpetrator of violence.
- 8.2 As part of the review of the National Disability Agreement, seek agreement from Council of Australian Governments that data on violence experienced by people with disabilities is collected by all disability services, and this data be disaggregated according to gender, context where violence occurred, and the perpetrator of violence.
- 8.3 The composition of the Women with Disabilities Expert Panel includes representation from Women With Disabilities Australia, the National Centre of Excellence, the Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children, governments, community agencies, and representation of women with cognitive impairments.
- 8.4 Advocate for the continuation of the Select Council on Women's Issues (SCWI) to provide strong leadership for states and territories to work collaboratively to improve policy and programs to assist in reducing family violence against women and girls with disabilities as a key priority in the Second Action Plan.

APPENDICES

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

STOP THE VIOLENCE PROJECT (STVP) NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM COMMUNIQUÉ – VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

On 25 October 2013, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash opened the Stop the Violence Project (STVP) National Symposium – *violence prevention and response for women and girls with disabilities*.

The National Symposium was hosted by Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Chair of the Stop the Violence Project Steering Group, Ms Elizabeth Broderick.

The need for targeted measures to address violence against women and girls with disabilities, in order for them to participate as full and equal citizens in Australian society, has been identified as a priority in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. The National Plan recognises that in Australia, women and girls with disabilities experience high levels of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, and have high unmet needs in terms of access to domestic violence, sexual assault and related community services.

In her opening address, Minister Cash delivered a message from the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP:

“Violence against women and girls is utterly unacceptable. It is unacceptable in Australia and unacceptable across the world. The Stop the Violence National Symposium is confronting the serious issue of violence against women and girls. In particular it will focus on confronting violence against women and girls with disabilities. The Symposium is also promoting the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. I am working with my colleague and Minister Assisting for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, to ensure the National Plan is implemented, is effective and supports our most vulnerable. I congratulate Women With Disabilities Australia, People With Disability Australia and the University of New South Wales for your work on the Stop the Violence Project and for organising this event. I send my best wishes for a successful event.”

Minister Cash also stated:

“We are all here today to recognise the very particular needs of women with disabilities who experience violence. It’s a fact, we all know it, that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence than other women. Many women with a disability face additional problems in accessing appropriate support, and we all know the reality is that fewer have the option of escaping violence. We also hear, very disappointingly, of too many stories of violence within supported care and residential care facilities. Again, completely, totally and utterly unacceptable...”

"...In relation to the National Plan, many of you whom I had the opportunity of meeting with when I was the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary would know that I am 110 per cent committed to the implementation of the National Plan. We are now at the end of the first phase of the National Plan... We have made some great progress under phase one. However, there is still work to do. The Prime Minister and I are committed to working with each and every one of you to ensure that the next phase of the National Plan ensures that we take a step-up in reducing violence against women and children."

Commissioner Broderick warmly welcomed the commitment to National Plan implementation made by the Prime Minister and Minister Cash. She highlighted the recent recommendation made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "that Australia should include a more comprehensive consideration of women with disabilities in public programs and policies on the prevention of gender based violence, particularly so as to ensure access for women with disabilities to an effective integrated response system".

The first plenary session of the National Symposium outlined the key issues in violence and women and girls with disabilities. President of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), Ms Karin Swift provided an introduction to the issue, providing information on the higher prevalence of all forms violence experienced by women with disability, and stating that "when gender and disability intersect, violence has unique causes, takes on unique forms and results in unique consequences".

As part of a panel, four women with disabilities presented on their experience and knowledge of the diverse and unique ways that violence occurs and affects women and girls with disabilities:

- Ms Gayle Rankine, Chairperson of First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) highlighted the lack of support and protection and the greater risks for Indigenous women with disability in urban, rural and remote settings.

- Ms Nihal Iscel, Advocacy Manager, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre WA outlined issues for women with disability from non-English speaking and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ms Janice Slattery, Self-Advocate and Peer Educator and Researcher discussed issues for women with intellectual disability and the research and training she conducts in this area.
- Ms Margie Charlesworth, Vice-President of WWDA spoke about barriers to accessing justice for women with communication impairments, who are often not believed or viewed as credible.

The second plenary of the National Symposium outlined the challenges and opportunities for change, and was introduced by Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Graeme Innes.

Commissioner Innes outlined the gaps in both the current legislative and policy frameworks that focus on disability and those that focus on the prevention of violence against women. These gaps largely arise "because the intersection between gender and disability is generally not taken into account... and because legislative and policy frameworks lack a human rights context in relation to the human rights treaties that Australia has ratified".

The second panel was made up of researchers, practitioners and advocates, who provided an overview of key gaps in a range of service systems, including disability, mental health and justice service systems.

Ms Debbie Kilroy, CEO of Sisters Inside discussed the specific risks of violence and the barriers embedded in the justice system for women with disabilities, and presented disturbing examples of situations experienced by women with disabilities.

Dr Gabrielle Drake, lecturer and researcher at the University of Western Sydney described the appalling situation experienced by women with disabilities living in boarding houses in NSW, and the daily risks of violence they experience in these institutional settings.

Dr Leanne Dowse, Senior Researcher at UNSW for the STVP outlined the evidence gathering process, the key areas identified for further action and the implications of the findings for good policy and practice.

In the afternoon, participants worked in pre-assigned groups to identify key issues, measures and actions to address the eight key areas emerging from the evidence base:

- Establishment and Development of the Virtual Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities
- Establishment of a National High Level Inter-Agency Taskforce on the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities
- Evidence Gathering, Research and Development
- Information, Education and Capacity Building for Women and Girls with Disabilities
- Awareness Raising for the Broader Community
- Education and Training for Service Providers
- Service Sector Development and Reform
- Legislation, National Agreements and Policy Frameworks.

The information obtained from workshops will inform the principles, strategies and actions needed to ensure effective violence prevention and response for women and girls with disabilities. These will be outlined in the National Symposium Report of Proceedings and Outcomes to be provided to the Department of Social Services, and publicly released in December 2013.

Commissioner Broderick closed the National Symposium, thanking participants for their commitment and hard work throughout the day:

"The National Symposium enabled experts from a broad range of policy and service sectors to assist in identifying measures for cross-sector service system reform. However, this is only the beginning of discussion on this important issue, and the day's deliberations have given a sound platform for further work and improvements for women and girls with disabilities who experience, or are at risk of violence. We need to ensure that this sound platform is part of phase two of the National Plan, as this is critical to ensure that violence prevention and response is inclusive of women and girls with disabilities."

Further information about the National Symposium, including the Background Paper, Discussion Paper, presentation podcasts and transcripts and the Report of Proceedings and Outcomes are available on the STVP website, www.stvp.org.au

ABOUT THE STOP THE VIOLENCE PROJECT

The STVP is being undertaken by Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) with support from People with Disability Australia (PWDA) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW). It has been funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) through its *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

The STVP also aligns with the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* (NDS), which was formally endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 13 February 2011.

The STVP is overseen by a Project Steering Group (PSG), which is chaired by **Ms Elizabeth Broderick**, Sex Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission. The other members of the PSG are:

Ms Julia Braybrooks
Women NSW

Ms Vanessa Swan
Office for Women (South Australia)

Ms Mary Bereux
Office of Women's Affairs, Dept. of Human Services (Victoria)

Ms Rebecca Moles
Dept. of Premier and Cabinet (Tasmania)

Ms Fiona Baker
Office for Women (Australian Capital Territory)

Ms Suzanne Everingham
Office of Women's Advancement (Northern Territory)

Ms Wendy Murray
Disability Services Commission (Western Australia)

Ms Philippa Angley
National Disability Services

Ms Stephanie Gotlib
Children with Disability Australia

Ms Julie Oberin / Ms Taryn Champion
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Ms Cassandra Goldie
Australian Council of Social Services

Ms Annie Parkinson
Women With Disabilities Australia

Ms Therese Sands
People with Disability Australia

Dr Leanne Dowse
The University of New South Wales

Dr Karen Soldatic
The University of New South Wales

Queensland is not represented on the PSG, but is participating in out-of-session discussions and activities. The Queensland point of contact for the STVP is the Violence Prevention Team, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

The STVP is based on the vision and foundational work of Ms Carolyn Frohmader, Executive Director, Women With Disabilities Australia.

The PSG Secretariat can be contacted by email, stvp@pwd.org.au

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ATTENDEES

	Ministers	
1	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
	Project Steering Group (PSG)	Organisation
2	Elizabeth Broderick (PSG Chair)	Sex Discrimination Commissioner Australian Human Rights Commission
3	Annie Parkinson	Former President Women With Disabilities Australia
4	Vanessa Swan	Director Office for Women (SA)
5	Fiona Baker	Manger ACT Office for Women
6	Rebecca Moles	Manger – Policy Dept. of Premier and Cabinet (TAS)
7	Julia Braybrooks on behalf of Sarah Squire	Policy Officer Women NSW
8	Julie Oberin	Chair Australian Women Against Violence Alliance
9	Philippa Angley	National Policy Manager National Disability Services
10	Cassandra Goldie	CEO Australian Council of Social Services
	Expert Consultative Group (ECG)	Organisation
11	Alison Aggarwal	Principal Adviser, Sex Discrimination Team Australian Human Rights Commission
12	Margaret Camilleri	Honorary Associate Researcher University of Ballarat
13	Margie Charlesworth	Vice President Women With Disabilities Australia
14	Samantha Connor	Coordinator Disability Clothesline
15	Gabrielle Drake	Lecturer University of Western Sydney
16	Maeve Dunnett	Trainer Insideout Disability Awareness
17	Fiona Given	Independent Consultant
18	Keran Howe	Coordinator Women With Disabilities Victoria
19	Nihal Iscel	Manager of Advocacy Services Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre
20	Karen Jordan	Independent consultant
21	Debbie Kilroy	CEO Sister Inside

22	Gayle Rankine	Chair First People's Disability Network Australia
23	Christina Ricci	Disability Rights Team Australian Human Rights Commission
24	Christina Ryan	General Manager Advocacy for Inclusion
25	Karin Swift	President Women With Disabilities Australia
	Project Implementation Committee (PIC)	Organisation
26	Carolyn Frohmader	Executive Director Women With Disabilities Australia
27	Leanne Dowse	Senior Lecturer University of NSW
28	Karen Soldatic	Lecturer University of NSW
29	Therese Sands	Co- Chief Executive Director People With Disability Australia
30	Wendi Wicks	STVP Project Manager People With Disability Australia
31	Aminath Didi	STVP Project Coordinator University of NSW
32	Georgia van Toorn	Research Assistant University of NSW
33	Peter Darby	Information and Project Liaison Officer People With Disability Australia
	Project Support	Organisation
34	Jess Cadwallader	Advocacy Projects Officer People With Disability Australia
35	Jennifer Jones	Australian Human Rights Commission
36	Emily Maguire	Australian Human Rights Commission
	Other Expert Stakeholders	Organisation
37	James Bannister	Senior Sector Development Officer National Disability Services
38	Jennifer Clarke	Policy Officer Homelessness Australia
39	Anna Cody	Chair Community Legal Centres NSW
40	Mary Durkin	Health Disability and Community Services Commissioner ACT Human Rights Commission
41	Jennifer Ellis	Member of the South Western Sydney Institute of Domestic and Family Violence Skilled Development Strategy Team South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE NSW

42	Patsie Frawley	Research Fellow LaTrobe University
43	Selina Getley	Manager, Policy and Projects Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children
44	Louise Glanville	Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategic Policy and Coordination Group Attorney-General's Department
45	Jen Hargrave	Policy Officer Women with Disabilities Victoria
46	Graeme Innes	Disability Discrimination Commissioner Australian Human Rights Commission
47	Evan Lewis	Group Manager Department of Social Services
48	Liz Little	Chair National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
49	Joslene Mazel	Board Member National Centre of Excellence
50	Magdalena McGuire	Research and Policy Officer Office of the Public Advocate Victoria
51	Leigh Michel	ASD Specialist
52	Sandy Miller	Deputy Chairperson National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
53	Clare Morton	Director Department of Justice Victoria
54	Brad Petry	Director of the National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics Australian Bureau of Statistics
55	Janice Slattery	Individual Self-Advocate/Peer Educator and Researcher
56	Lorna Sullivan	Director Disability ACT
57	Jolanta Willington	Branch Manager Department of Social Services
58	Karen Willis	Executive Officer NSW Rape Crisis Centre



Women
With
Disabilities
Australia
(WWDA)