



Women  
With  
Disabilities  
Australia  
(WWDA)

# ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2021- JUNE 2022

# PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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## Acknowledgments

WWDA acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which this publication was produced. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's deep spiritual connection to this land. We extend our respects to community members and Elders past, present and emerging.

Prepared by Carolyn Frohmader, WWDA Executive Director.

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Winner, National Violence Prevention Award 1999  
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Nominee, French Republic's Human Rights Prize 2003  
Nominee, UN Millennium Peace Prize for Women 2000

**Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.**

## Disclaimer

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ABN: 23 627 650 121

# ABOUT WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AUSTRALIA (WWDA)

[Women With Disabilities Australia \(WWDA\)](#) is the national Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) for women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability in Australia. As a DPO, WWDA is run by and for women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability.

WWDA uses the term 'women and girls with disability', on the understanding that this term is inclusive and supportive of, women and girls with disability along with feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability in Australia.

WWDA represents more than 2 million women and girls with disability in Australia, has affiliate organisations and networks of women with disability in most States and Territories, and is recognised nationally and internationally for our leadership in advancing the rights and freedoms of all women and girls with disability. Our organisation operates as a transnational human rights organisation - meaning that our work, and the impact of our work, extends much further than Australia.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are recognised around the world, and in international human rights law, as self-determining organisations led by, controlled by, and constituted of, people with disability. DPOs are organisations of people with disability, as opposed to organisations which may represent people with disability. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has clarified that States should give priority to the views of DPOs when addressing issues related to people with disability. The Committee has further clarified that States should prioritise resources to organisations of people with disability that focus primarily on advocacy for disability rights and, adopt an enabling policy framework favourable to their establishment and sustained operation.

Australia is a signatory to seven international human rights treaties. These are:

- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

In addition to these seven international human rights treaties, in 2009, Australia also formally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - an international human rights instrument that sets a standard for the protection of Indigenous rights. By signing up to these international human rights treaties, Australia has agreed to implement their requirements within Australia. Most of these seven treaties include responsibilities to improve the rights of people with disability, of women, and of other marginalised groups.

All WWDA's work is grounded in a human rights-based framework that links issues of gender and disabilities to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. This means that WWDA uses the international human rights treaties to which Australia has signed up to, to guide and inform our work. WWDA does this, because our key mission is to advance and promote the human rights and freedoms of all women and girls and disability.

WWDA holds **Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**. This means that WWDA is formally recognised by the United Nations for our expertise in gender and disability. It also allows WWDA to be invited to, and formally contribute to, the work of the United Nations.

To find out more about WWDA, including how to join (membership is free) go to:

<https://wwda.org.au>

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# ABOUT WWDA'S ANNUAL REPORT

This Annual Report provides a summary snapshot of just **some** of WWDA's key outputs, activities, and achievements for the financial year reporting period **1st July 2021 – 30th June 2022**. The Report demonstrates the breadth, scope, and high standard of WWDA's work, on a wide range of initiatives and programs, across all portfolio areas and across jurisdictions. Our Annual Report highlights and reflects WWDA's commitment to promoting and advancing the rights and freedoms of women and girls with disability – both within Australia and around the world. Our Annual Report also reflects the strong intersectional human rights-based approach from which we operate.

It is outside the scope of this Report to do justice to the extensive work of WWDA during the reporting period July 2021 – June 2022. However, in compiling this brief Summary Report, we have endeavoured to give our members, supporters, and funders a synopsis of just **some** of the key activities our organisation has undertaken, and has been engaged in, as part of our efforts to promote the rights of all women and girls with disability – both within Australia and internationally.

As part of this Annual Report, we highlight and acknowledge:

- the WWDA staff, for their commitment and hard work over the last year. The sheer volume of outputs from a really small team is remarkable and something we are all really proud of.
- the WWDA Management Committee members, in particular Jess White for her assistance with WWDA's new constitution and work and progress towards improving the WWDA Management Committee's processes and governance.
- our WWDA members who have undertaken significant National Representative work, for and on behalf of women and girls with disability.
- the Department of Social Service (DSS) and the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (OFW) for providing WWDA with operational and project funding.
- Our CEO's daughter Lottie, who always continues to support Carolyn and WWDAS work, even in the context of Lottie's health adversities this year.
- The extraordinary commitment, dedication and leadership of our CEO, Carolyn Frohmader who always goes above and beyond the call of duty in endeavours to advance the human rights of all women and girls with disability.

Further detail of WWDA's work can be found on our extensive website at [www.wwda.org.au](http://www.wwda.org.au) and across our other platforms, which can be accessed from our website.

# WWDA BOARD 2021-2022



**Kat Reed**  
Secretary



**Pamela Menere**  
Treasurer



**Jessica White**  
President



**Tanya Sinclair**  
Board Member



**Maria Scharnke**  
Board Member



**Casey Gray**  
Board Member

WWDA **staff profiles** can be found on the WWDA website at:

<https://wwda.org.au/about/board-and-staff/>

# SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

This Annual Report provides a summary snapshot of just **some** of WWDA's key outputs, activities and achievements at the national and international level for the financial year reporting period **1st July 2021 – 30th June 2022**. The Report demonstrates the breadth, scope and high standard of WWDA's work, on a wide range of initiatives and programs, across all portfolio areas and across jurisdictions. Our Annual Report highlights and reflects WWDA's commitment to promoting and advancing the rights and freedoms of women and girls with disability. Our Annual Report also reflects the human rights-based approach from which we operate.

This Annual Report is structured in line with WWDA's operational funding contract with the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The Report is also aligned with WWDA's Strategic Plan 2017-2022 which was published after extensive consultation with our members and constituents. WWDA's Strategic Plan 2017-2022 contains five main goals. Under each goal are listed key objectives which set out how we intend to achieve our goals. The five goals are to:

1. Undertake focused systemic advocacy on priority human rights issues identified by women and girls with disability: freedom from all forms of violence; decision-making and participation; sexual and reproductive rights; economic security, justice.
2. Build on and further develop WWDA's profile and reputation at the national and international levels as the globally recognised leader on advancing the human rights of women and girls with disability.
3. Contribute to the development, implementation and monitoring of Australian Government legislation and policies that affect women and girls with disability.
4. Enhance WWDA's capacity to consult, engage and represent young women and girls with disability.
5. Develop infrastructure, systems and mechanisms to enable WWDA to effect its purpose, goals and objectives.

It is outside the scope of this Annual Report to do justice to the extensive work of WWDA during the reporting period July 2021 – June 2022. However, in compiling this summary report, we have

endeavoured to give our members, supporters, and funders a synopsis of just some of the key activities our organisation has undertaken, and has been engaged in, as part of our efforts to promote the rights of all women and girls with disability.

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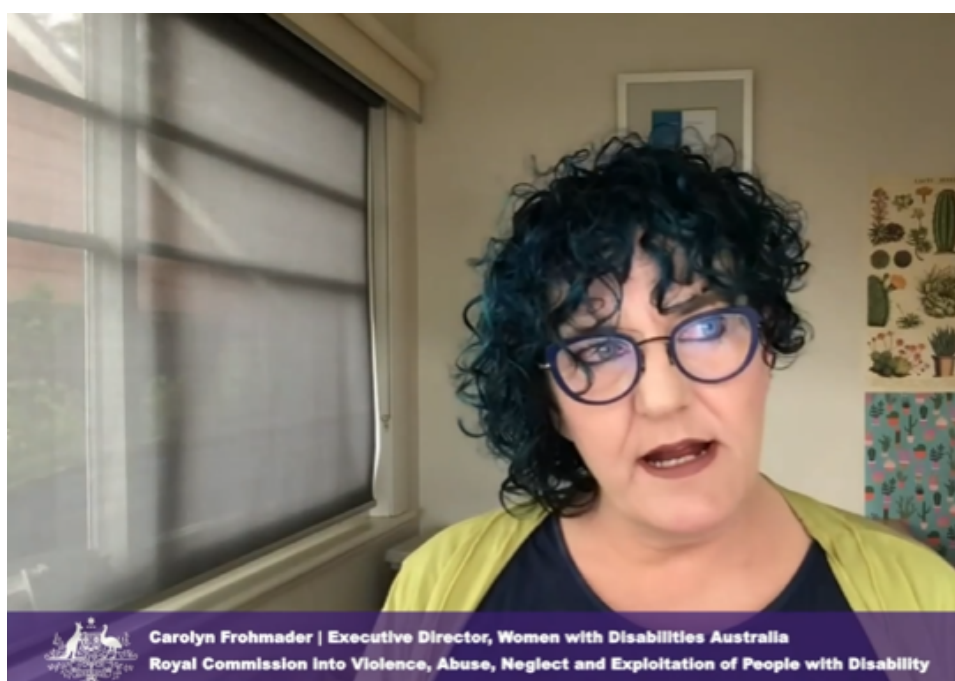
# THE DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION

During the reporting period, WWDA continued our work on the [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#) which was formally announced by the Prime Minister on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019 with submissions closing on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2022.

WWDA has given evidence and significant support to the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) this year, as well researched and written several comprehensive evidence-based Submissions and produced a series of accessible resources for our members.

*“Two of the most critical issues in the context of denial of sexual and reproductive rights for women and girls with disability are forced sterilisation and forced contraception” - Carolyn Frohmader, CEO of WWDA.*

WWDA CEO, Carolyn Frohmader represented women, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability at Part 1 of the Disability Royal Commission Public Hearing on ‘The Health and Safety of Women and Girls with Disability’. The Hearing focused on the experience of women and girls with disability with an particular focus on family, domestic and sexual violence. Carolyn spoke about the denial of women and girls with disabilities access to sexual and reproductive rights, including forced and coerced sterilisation, abortion and contraception, denial of sexual expression, poor management of pregnancy and birth and exclusion from proper sexual and reproductive health and education. She also raised issues with group home settings for women with disabilities, where sexual and reproductive rights were at particular risk of interference.



*Image: Carolyn Frohmader at the Disability Royal Commission hearing.*

The Disability Royal Commission Public Hearing 17.2 was held in Hobart from 28 March to 1 April 2022, on the experience of women and girls with disability with family, domestic and sexual violence.

Over the course of the five days, many women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability gave evidence on family or domestic settings, group homes, institutions, hospitals, education settings and workplaces. Victim-survivors not only spoke about their experiences but made important recommendations about what needs to change to make their lives safer and more supported.

On Day 4, WWDA staff including Carolyn Frohmader, Mali Hermans and Tess Moodie gave evidence from a systemic advocacy perspective and reinforced what needs to change to prevent violence against women with disability. WWDA made some key recommendations including:

- The establishment of a gender strategy and violence and abuse assessment process by the NDIS
- The abolishment of segregated settings and restrictive practices
- Embedding a human rights approach in defining and understanding violence against women and girls with disability
- The review of laws and national definition of gender-based violence

You can watch videos and read transcripts from the public hearing, including Hobart's hearing on the [DRC website 'Public Hearings' section](#).



**Image: Tess Moodie (left), Carolyn Frohmader (Middle) and Vanamali Hermans (Right) giving evidence at the Disability Royal Commission hearing in Hobart.**

During the reporting period, WWDA has undertaken a significant amount of work for and with our members in order to support them to learn about, and engage in, the work of the Disability Royal Commission. Just some of this work has included:

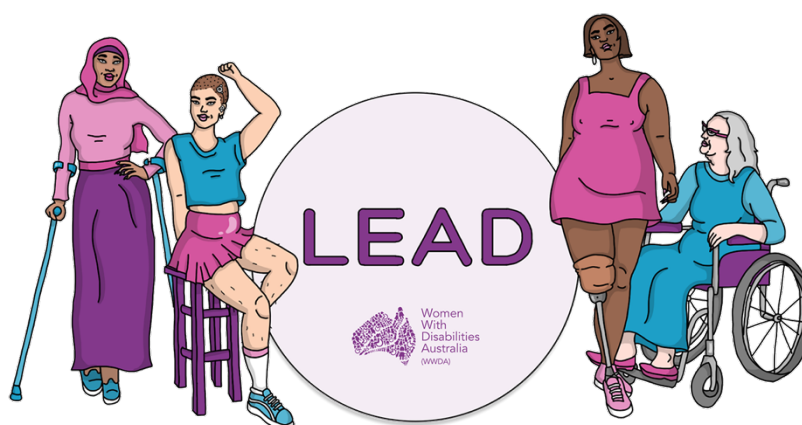
- Developing and disseminating a series of [Videos](#) including videos in eleven different languages and three Indigenous languages ([Pitjantjatjarra](#), [Arrernte](#) and [Warlpiri](#)).
- Developing, updating and maintaining the WWDA website [campaign landing page on the DRC](#).
- Developing and disseminating a wide range of [Easy English Fact Sheets](#) and [Booklet](#)
- Implementing specific, targeted initiatives and activities to build the capacity of young women, feminine identifying and non-binary young people, to engage with the Disability Royal Commission, including for example, a specific [WWDA Youth Network social media campaign promoting engagement with DRC](#).
- Engaging with and supporting individual WWDA members (and non-members) to discuss how they can tell their stories to the Disability Royal Commission in a safe and supportive way, including young people.
- Attending regular formal meetings with the Disability Royal Commission.
- Attending fortnightly sector meetings to discuss the DRC.
- Providing policy advice and resource materials to the DRC.
- Participating as a member of Advisory Groups for research projects commissioned by the DRC.
- Working with individual women with disability to provide their story to the DRC.
- Undertaking dedicated and targeted research, consultation and engagement with ‘hard to reach’ and traditionally ‘excluded’ groups of disabled women and girls.
- Undertaking research on international programs and initiatives that promote the rights of disabled women and girls, particularly in relation to reproductive rights, supported decision-making, health, and decision-making.
- Initiating, coordinating and undertaking work on behalf of the DRO sector in relation to the DRC.
- Live-tweeting DRC Public Hearings on behalf of WWDA and the broader DRO sector.
- Providing brokerage work to assist the DRC to find witnesses to participate in the DRC Public Hearings.
- Developing relevant correspondence to the DRC on issues affecting women and girls with disability.
- Undertaking media interviews (including through TV, radio, and print media) to highlight issues of concern for women with disability in the context of the DRC.

- Highlighting the issues facing women and girls with disability (in the context of the Terms of Reference of the DRC) with Government Ministers, agencies, and senior bureaucrats.
- Assisting the DRC to run two Public Hearings on Women and Girls with Disability.
- Promoting all work of the DRC, including Public Hearings, and calls for Submissions etc, through a wide range of WWDA platforms.
- Promoting WWDA's Submissions to the DRC widely at the national and international level, including to United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies, Departments and agencies.



*Image: Social Media engagement with public hearings.*

# WWDA LEAD PROJECT: 'BUILDING CAPACITY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA'



Lead•Engage•Activate•Drive

In June 2020, WWDA secured a project grant from the NDIS Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program to implement a project over three years aimed at '*Building Capacity of Women and Girls with Disability in Australia*' - known as **WWDA LEAD – Lead, Engage, Activate and Drive**.

This ILC Project specifically recognises the need for the adoption of specific measures aimed at the development, advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disability and the promotion of measures to empower them by recognising that they are distinct rights holders, by providing channels to have their voice heard and to exercise agency, by raising their self-confidence and by increasing their power and authority to take decisions in all areas affecting their lives. Women and girls with disability (WGwD) have identified that one of the best ways for them to build their individual capacity is to come together with other WGwD – to share experiences, to gain strength from one another, to learn by doing, to be treated equally, to experience mentorship, and to work together on issues that affect them.

In the last year, the WWDA LEAD project has already made huge inroads to implementation and has seen improvements in the leadership capacity of women and girls with disability both individually and collectively.

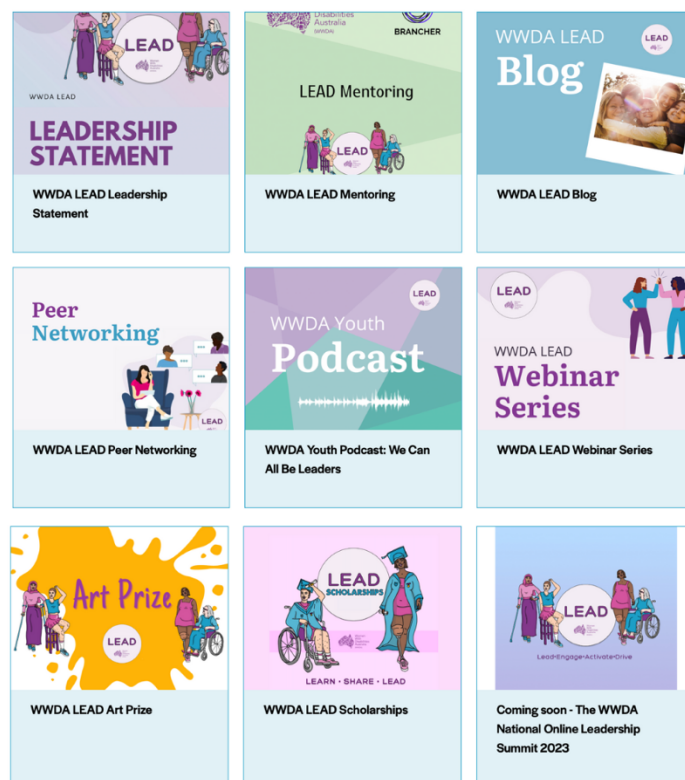
True to WWDA's human rights principles, the WWDA LEAD project has utilised an inclusive co-design methodology right from its inception, with a Project Steering Committee, made up of 7

women with disability advising on and overseeing the delivery of the entirety of the WWDA project, as well as representing WWDA on external committees and consultations.

Throughout the project so far, the WWDA team has found that the involvement of these committees has resulted in immeasurable benefits for both the women themselves, and WWDA's community of women and girls with disability more broadly.

*"I love connecting people with the resources they need to live their best life, regardless of who they are and where they live, I'm excited to be working with Women with Disability Australia (WWDA) to grow the potential and opportunities for all Australian women living with disability to develop and expand their leadership skills and influence." – Raelene Bock, Project Steering Committee member.*

Under the guidance of WWDA's advisory committees, as well as consultation with WWDA members, the WWDA staff team has already successfully implemented a huge number of project activities and initiatives for WWDA members, including, a [leadership survey](#), leadership position statement, [leadership blog](#), [scholarship program](#), [webinar series](#), [podcast series](#), [art prize](#), [mentoring program](#), [online peer-networking sessions](#), free training courses, virtual movie nights, social media discussions and more; all of which have had a significant number of attendees and great feedback from members.



The **WWDA Blog** written BY women and non-binary people with disability FOR women and non-binary people with disability continues to be a space to explore what leadership means to us! This year we've posted nearly 30 blog posts exploring everything from gender-based violence to leadership in the workplace.

Some brilliant blog posts this reporting year included:

- *'Working with mental illness'* – in which Cheryl shared her experiences of living with mental illness and physical disability “When I was ready to return to the workforce, I was much more mindful when seeking employment as I was committed to finding part-time employment in a supportive environment – one that would not be detrimental to my mental health.”
- *'Blindness is a Spectrum'*, in which Bethany Cody speaks to her experience of being diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, which comes with permanent sight loss. “Going blind was one of my biggest fears growing up and in some strange twist of irony, I've been quietly living with it my whole life.”
- *'Why it's important to see Disabled Women as Leaders in Law'*, in which Margherita Dall'Occo-Vaccaro shared her story and experience about seeing disabled women represented as leaders in law and the impacts that has as a young, disabled woman studying law. “I am proud of my disabled community in law. I am proud of all the women in law who have fought for their rightful place. I am proud of all the young disabled law students navigating the start of their journey within the law.”

Find out more about how to submit to the WWDA Blog here:

<https://wwda.org.au/wwda-lead-blog/>

The WWDA team has established the WWDA LEAD **Toolkit Co-Design Committee** made up of 10-15 women with disability, who will advise on, design, draft and review a number of unique and one-of-a-kind WWDA resources including a new WWDA Leadership Toolkit, NDIS resources and more.

Internally, WWDA has also benefited greatly from the opportunities that the WWDA LEAD project has given the organisation to grow. In addition to the many outward facing activities, the team has been a number of initiatives aimed at upskilling, training and developing the capacity of existing and future staff, volunteers and committee/board members, including supporting individuals to take part

in training courses, revising and developing the broad suite of WWDA policies and procedures, developing guides to assist WWDA members with representation and facilitating strategic planning meetings and discussions with staff and Board members.

In late 2023, the WWDA LEAD project forward facing activities will culminate with a national virtual leadership summit for the broad array of women and girls with disability across Australia who have been involved in all the different aspects of the WWDA LEAD project. The Summit will be the launch site for the Leadership Toolkit as well as a celebration of everything that the project has achieved for WWDA and its members.

## **Project Steering Committee**

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) convened their 13<sup>th</sup> meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022. These meetings have had good attendance, with most members attending all. The June meeting was cancelled due to ill-health and no staff available to facilitate. A list of founding PSC members can be found on the [WWDA website](#).

## **Summit Co-Design Committee**

The Summit Co-Design Committee has met regularly convening their 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022. We have experienced good attendance at these meetings with people joining via online as well as over the phone. With the Summit still in planning process we look forward to continuing discussions about our upcoming Leadership Summit.

## **WWDA LEAD Leadership Toolkit**

In the second half of 2021, WWDA worked with a contractor, Caroline Lambert, and the PSC to co-design a structure for the WWDA Leadership Toolkit. Following this process, WWDA hired a Content Development Officer for the LEAD project to oversee the mammoth task of setting up, coordinating and communicating with a new Toolkit Codesign Committee (TCC) to develop the toolkit. The committee was established in late 2021 to advise, inform and guide the creation of the Toolkit, to make sure that it is indeed a resource made for and by WGwD. In May 2022, the Content Development Officer resigned for personal reasons and another Project Officer working part-time on LEAD resigned to accept another position at another DPO. Therefore, the Toolkit process was temporarily paused while we recruited and onboarded a new Content Development Officer and Project Officer for the WWDA LEAD project.

To date, WWDA staff have convened 2 Toolkit Codesign Committee meetings, multiple one-on-one interviews with diverse range of WGwD, multiple small focus groups and content writing workshops to ensure meaningful and non-tokenistic co-design.

Creativa have been contracted to design 5 mini leadership videos that sum up the WWDA LEAD's Five Leadership Principles that were created in codesign process for the WWDA Leadership Statement which will go alongside the copy in Section One of the Toolkit that is in process. Ailie Banks illustrated the WWDA LEAD logo and the WWDA Leadership Statement and Poster, has been contracted to create illustrations/assets for these videos in collaboration with Creativa's artists. And a young woman with Disability from the [Fusion Theatre](#) in Melbourne has been contracted to do the voice over for videos.

Section Two and Section Three of the Toolkit are also in progress and involve WGwD in content creation. The Easy Read version will be contracted out once the final draft has been approved by our CEO for publication.

Due to staff attrition, recruiting and onboarding the Toolkit is now looking to be launched in late 2023 with a large focus and communications strategy around the idea that "We Can All Be Leaders" and the Leadership goals of WGwD.

## Webinars

Since February 2022 WWDA has hosted two webinars as part of the WWDA LEAD webinar series: Webinar #8 'Leadership Statement Launch and Webinar #9 WWDA Intersections: LGBTIQ+ and Disability.

The 'WWDA Leadership Statement Launch Webinar' was held on International Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March to officially launch the WWDA Leadership Statement. The statement was launched by Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Women. The webinar also included a panel of women and non-binary people with disability, who talked about the codesign process and the importance of transforming definitions of leadership. WGwD involved with this webinar included: The WWDA Leadership Statement Creation (14), Leadership Statement Launch webinar planning and recording (5), Leadership Statement Launch Webinar Live Registrations (93), Leadership Statement Launch recording views on WWDA Website (101), Leadership Statement Launch recording views on YouTube (29).

On 17<sup>th</sup> of May WWDA hosted a WWDA LEAD webinar 'Intersections: LGBTIQ+ and Disability' with a great panel of nonbinary people with disability and diverse range of experiences. WGwD involved

with this webinar included: Webinar planning and recording (7), webinar live registrations (111), on WWDA Website (62), webinar recording on YouTube (46).

Throughout the project, the webinar series has successfully featured and platformed WGwD and their experiences. All of the webinars have been well attended, and WWDA received positive feedback and appreciation for making them accessible and inclusive. The last webinar in the WWDA LEAD webinar series will be on LGBTIQ+ & Disability on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). The webinar series has also provided an opportunity for WWDA to provide information on and promote WWDA LEAD's other activities and opportunities and has allowed staff to grow their capacity and skills in event organising; which will greatly benefit future activities such as the WWDA LEAD National Summit.

In response to our webinar series, we have received positive feedback on the accessibility and quality of our webinars. One participant stated.

*"It was finally fantastic to have full accessibility in the leadership webinar in that there was live captioning in the box so I could see both the Presentations, the person speaking and the live box captioning happening on the same page – truly wonderful and I felt so inclusive, and it provided me with equal opportunity, equal access and equal rights as a deaf professional in the public sector as others who may not have a hearing loss. It was fantastic to see the fantastic and wonderful high level skilled Auslan Interpreter in the other box on the same page as the presentations and the speaker – it was a true inclusion".*

A full list of WWDA LEAD webinars is provided below:

- **Webinar #1 - We Can All Be Leaders:** On the 15th of March, WWDA hosted the first WWDA LEAD webinar '**We Can All Be Leaders,**' with a great panel of four women and non-binary people with disability.
- **Webinar# 2 - Scholarships Information Session:** On 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the WWDA LEAD team held a webinar information session for people to learn about the WWDA LEAD scholarships before applying (more details about WWDA LEAD Scholarships in point 9 below).
- **Webinar #3 - NDIS and Gender:** On the 27th of May, WWDA hosted the second webinar to discuss why women are not accessing the NDIS at the same rate as men. Our expert panel discussed the current barriers and what we can be done, to ensure equal access to the NDIS.

- **Webinar #4 - Avenues of Support:** On the 14th of July, WWDA hosted the third webinar to discuss avenues of support for women, girls, feminine identifying, and non-binary people with disabilities. Our expert panel discussed the tips and tricks to avoid burnout.
- **Webinar #5 - Art Prize Awards Ceremony:** Announcing the winners of Art Prize categories and an opportunity for members to hear from some of the winners about their creative practice, and most importantly, celebrate the talent and work of our wonderful community.
- **Webinar #6 – Disability and Identity:** On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, WWDA hosted our WWDA LEAD and WWDA Youth Network Webinar ‘Disability and Identity’ with a great panel of women and nonbinary people with disability with a diverse range of experiences.
- **Webinar #7 – ‘Report on Young Women and Nonbinary Peoples Experiences of Gender-Based Violence across Australia’:** On 17<sup>th</sup> February, WWDA worked with the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA), the National Women’s Safety Network (WESNET) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance (NATSIWA) to launch the ‘Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People’s Experiences of Gender-Based Violence across Australia.’ The webinar launch brought to light key findings of the report and highlighted unique elements of the survey and forum design. It also included a panel of young women and nonbinary people who discussed violence prevention, reporting mechanisms, service gaps and what meaningful change to end gender-based violence looks like.
- **Webinar #8 – WWDA Leadership Statement Launch Webinar:** The ‘WWDA Leadership Statement Launch Webinar’ was held on International Women’s Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March to officially launch the WWDA Leadership Statement. The statement was launched by Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Women. The webinar also included a panel of women and non-binary people with disability, n who talked about the codesign process and the importance of transforming definitions of leadership.
- **Webinar #9 – WWDA Intersections: LGBTIQA+ and Disability Webinar:** On 17<sup>th</sup> of May WWDA hosted a WWDA LEAD webinar ‘Intersections: LGBTIQA+ and Disability’ with a great panel of nonbinary people with disability and diverse range of experiences.

All of the webinar recordings can be viewed on [WWDA’s website](#) and [webinar channel](#).

## WWDA LEAD Peer Networking

WWDA LEAD conducted seven Peer Networking events from June 2021 until July 2022. The WWDA LEAD Peer Networking virtual events created a space for other women, girls, and gender diverse

people with disability to share ideas and connect with others in their community and learn how to get more involved in LEAD activities.

October 2021 – Peer Mentoring

December 2021 – LGBTIQA+ and disability

January 2021 – LGBTIQA+ and disability #2

March 2022 – Impacts of COVID-19

April 2022 – Climate change and natural disaster recovery; Education and Disability

June 2022 – LGBTIQA+ and disability

## **Mentoring Program #2**

While we were focused on the Individual Capacity Building (ICB) of WGwD with Brancher in our Mentoring Program #1. Our collaborative approach and style of work resulted in the Mainstream Capacity Building (MCB) of Brancher.

We have contracted Brancher to develop a new more inclusive and accessible Mentoring program which was announced in early October 2022 and Mentors recruited, with the program opening for Mentees in mid-November 2022. We aim to pair up to 100 WGwD over the following 12 months.

This program will be more flexible regarding pace and time commitment and have specific disability accessible training and resources such as Easy English. Access Easy English have been contracted to create the Easy English documents and have reached out to WWDA LEAD to offer paid consultant work for 2 WGwD.

# NATIONAL WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

In 2021 Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) [received funding for the first time](#) from the Australian Federal Government's Office for Women (OFW) Women's Leadership and Development program to represent women, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability as a [National Women's Alliance](#).

As a new Alliance, WWDA established a Policy Advisory Group (PAG), made up of three organisational representatives, who represent state and cohort-based organisations and networks of women, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability; as well as seven individual women, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability. PAG members advise on the work WWDA does as a National Women's Alliance, and ensure our organisation is representative of a wide range of women, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability across Australia.

This year, WWDA accomplished a wide range of work as a Women's Alliance including:

- Contributing to conversations and groups with other Women's Alliances on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), including presenting at the Alliance forum.
- Leading conversations on disability inclusion across all sectors.
- Running various media campaigns including 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence
- Working with the PAG on an Election Platform of policy recommendations including calls on the NDIS, Climate Change and Economic Security.
- Worked with other WWDA projects to organise and facilitate webinars
- Supported staff and members to attend the Conference of State Parties in June.
- Facilitated an Asia Pacific Network of Women with disabilities who regularly met to stay in touch in the region.
- Attended and represented at the National Alliances Forum

## Conference of State Parties 2022

WWDA had a significant presence at COSP this year with our youth delegate Margherita Dall'Occhio-Vaccaro and Board member Kat Reed attending as official DSS-funded delegates.

Daily blogs, Vlogs, pictures, and live tweeting ensured that the delegations' activities were recorded, shared and socialised in Australia and internationally. WWDA had a leading role in ensuring this vital international representative work was carried out successfully.

WWDA held a side event, on Our Site and how it was made in co-design, what co-design means and offered tips for other organisations working with women and girls with disability.

Youth delegate, Margherita Dall'Occo-Vaccaro, has written a report on her experience and learnings from COSP.

*“It was such an honour to go to New York and attend the conference. Not only was I able to interact and grow with the community of disabled people in Australia, as well as meet new people in the community, I was able to learn about a wide array of new ideas and projects to implement in my own youth work and advocacy.” – Margherita*

[Read the report](#)



Image: Part of the Civil Society Delegation including Kat Reed and Margherita Dall'Occo-Vaccaro at the UN.

# OUR SITE PROJECT

## Our Site Expansion Project Update December 2022 Project description

The Australian Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) has provided funding to Women with Disabilities Australia to develop National web-based resources to drive a reduction in the multiple forms of violence that women with disabilities experience. WWDA will deliver codesigned web-based resources that will ensure that women with disabilities have access to information about sex, sexuality, consent, violence, and abuse in a format created by women with disabilities for women with disabilities that will be hosted on [Our Site](#). The project will also increase the accessibility of Our Site to ensure women with disabilities can find information they need with greater ease.

## Project Purpose and priorities

The key over-arching purpose of this critically important project is to help drive a reduction in violence against women with a disability and to improve service responses when violence occurs.

The Our Site Expansion project will:

- Improve accessibility of Our Site for women and girls with disability (including intellectual disabilities), their families, support staff, frontline workers, and practitioners.
- Update the existing Our Site webpage to be a more accessible website that complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for women with disabilities, including women with intellectual disabilities.
- Create a new, expanded section of the website that provides information and support tailored to individuals working with women with disabilities (informal and formal care) around sex, relationship education, abuse, and violence against women with disability.
- Incorporate a range of feedback and user testing of the website and resources by women with disabilities (including intellectual disability) so they can navigate the resources WWDA Resources with great ease.

Through an end-to-end process of co-design, we intend to:

- to ensure that women with a disability and those that provide informal care and support for them (i.e., families, friends, neighbours, communities etc.) have greater accessibility to appropriate information, resources and support around safe sex, healthy relationships, abuse, and violence.

- to create an additional evidence-informed section and resource on the website to build greater capability in individuals working with women with disabilities to better understand, prevent and respond to abuse and violence against women with disabilities.

## Key Project Delivery areas

### *Area One: Creation of new web-based resources*

- The first section of the project will be to develop in codesign new web-based resources new one that provides information and support tailored to individuals working with women with disabilities (including
- women with intellectual disabilities) and supports (informal and formal care) around sex, relationship education, abuse, and violence against women with disability.
- The project team will develop these resources by hosting and coordinating national consultations and workshops, both face-to-face and online with women with disabilities and support.

### *Area Two: Improve and increase the accessibility of web-based resources*

- The second section of this project will be to Improve accessibility of Our Site for women and girls with disability (including intellectual disability), their families, support staff, frontline workers, and practitioners to meet a higher WCAG compliance level and to ensure women with disabilities can navigate the resources with greater ease.

### *Area Three: Development of violence prevention resources for individuals supporting women with disabilities*

- Creation of an evidence-informed section and resources on the website to build greater capability in individuals working with women with disabilities to better understand, prevent and respond to abuse and violence against women with disabilities.

### *Project Approach*

WWDA will deliver the Our Site Expansion Project using a similar project methodology and cyclical approach to continue to build on the evidence of the highly successful project delivery method of the original Our Site.

Accessibility, quality, and ownership by women with disability were important priorities for the Our Site website. These were also priorities for the project processes that WWDA used to create Our Site. At every stage, the project team aimed to make it as easy as possible, for as many diverse women with disability as possible, to contribute.

The website content and design elements were created through a series of website development 'cycles' intended to support the development of a high-quality, accessible new section of the website. Each cycle involved distinct phases of discovery, design, development, and user testing. Importantly, the leadership, input and advice from women with a disability was central to each cycle.

### *Project Update*

In our first six months we have recruited and onboarded new project staff, and most importantly facilitated the engagement of a Project Steering committee that will oversee the project across the two years to ensure that we engage in meaningful co-design. We had over 55 expressions of interest for the PSC in which 10 participants were selected, and a large focus of their role will be to help us identify new opportunities for co-design/co-production for as they arise through the project timeline.

A website designer has been engaged early, to be able to facilitate critical times for project outcomes and deliverables, that align with the timeframes of our funding bodies, PSC, WWDA management and the project team to ensure that we have an iterative process firmly mapped out for next year. Timelines and forward planning with external providers for web-based project's like these are pivotal to the success of web-based projects like this.

First iteration of the new website functionality has been developed and will be presented to our PSC for discussion in our first meeting in February 2023.

As part of the development/design process, two sets of face-to-face workshops will be held in Late May and Late October next year at multiple locations across the country. With everything running to plan, we will have the new enhancements ready to be launched in Jan 2024. After that stage of work has been completed a promotional and engagement strategy will be developed with our PSC and our various advisory/expert panels around a relaunch date/potential event.

### *Current Our Site*

Another hugely important component of this project is the inclusion to ensure that we are actively engaging and delivering new quality, accurate, accessible and relevant content to Our Site. We want to continue to actively promote Our Site as a best practise example of what relevant, reliable and accessible resources look like for women and girls with disability.

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

This year, WWDA was highly engaged with young people in various ways and continued to encourage young women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people to advocate for themselves.

The WWDA Youth Network / Advisory Group, made up of 12 young women and girls with disability has grown with membership changing and new members joining us throughout the year. The Youth network has met every two months, with various social events happening throughout the year.

The Network has worked on a series of resources under funding from the Consumer Health Forum which provide disability specific education on menstruation and contraception, including LGBTQIA+ health, sensory needs and more. These resources will be released in 2022 and early 2023 with Easy Read versions and videos. These resources support young people to advocate for themselves and learn about contraception and menstruation in a disability specific way.

The Youth Network has also set up a podcast with 10 episodes, interviewing a series of disability advocates and young people in the space. These include:

- Claire Bertholli – Young Leader
- Chloe Hayden – Actor and Advocate
- Jan Qian Yee Sam – Intersectionality Advocate
- Ana Pike – Disability Advocate and 2021 Tasmanian Disability Festival Awards Winner
- Ashleigh Rae - Writer and survivorship advocate
- Seli – NDIS Support Coordinator and Disability Consultant

Throughout the year, the Youth Network worked with WWDA to support various other projects, as well as setting up their own events. These included:

- WWDA Youth Watch Party and Discussion on Netflix film Crip Camp – Discussion on the film Crip Camp with other young people and connected other young people with the network
- Peer Networking – WWDA Youth Network held a session on the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), talking about how to give evidence as a young person and how to get involved in the DRC as a whole.
- Held a Youth Webinar on Disability and Identity which was highly attended
- Supporting various LEAD webinars and events, particularly giving youth input and perspective on various projects.



*Image of the WWDA Youth Advisory Group members, past and current.*

## NATIONAL ADVISORY BODIES – WWDA REPRESENTATION

During the 2021-2022 reporting period, WWDA was represented on more than **37 formal, national Advisory Committees** and structures. Many of these Advisory bodies are ongoing, and WWDA has been represented on some of these forums for much longer than the reporting period. Many of these national Advisory Committees meet on at least a monthly basis, and the work involved by being on these forums is often extremely labour intensive and requires a significant amount of work between the formal meetings.

These Advisory bodies are not ‘one off’ meetings or events – they are national Committees where specific, targeted work is undertaken by the members of the Committees on an ongoing basis. Some of the memberships of these Committees are determined by the relevant Government Minister, whereas others are Committees where memberships are determined by the particular Government Department or agency.

WWDA staff attended many events as representatives of WGwD during the reporting period, either as one-off events or as representatives for advisory bodies in an ongoing capacity. WWDA’s representation on many of these formal Committees is critical, given that women and girls with disability can often be overlooked or ‘forgotten’ in national initiatives, including reforms to existing national policies and frameworks, or, in the development of new policies, frameworks and other initiatives. WWDA’s representation on many of these national and formal Advisory structures have led to meaningful outcomes for the inclusion of disabled women and girls in national policy frameworks, regulatory bodies and program and service reforms.



*WWDA CEO (front row wearing a red shawl), meeting with Minister Katy Gallagher and members of the National Women’s Alliances.*

# WWDA POLICY SUBMISSIONS & EVIDENCE TO INQUIRIES

During the reporting period, WWDA developed a wide range of policy submissions to Government and other stakeholders across several issue areas; contributed to international initiatives to improve the status of women and girls with disability globally; contributed to disability reforms being undertaken by the Australian Government; provided evidence as a witness to a number of Senate and Parliamentary inquiries, and much more. It is outside the scope of this Report to provide a narrative on all the policy submission work WWDA has undertaken during the reporting period, however the following information is illustrative of just some of WWDA's extensive policy submission work program.

- Submission to the NDIS on Eight Priority Areas for Access and Planning Improvements
- Submission to the Inquiry on the Purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension
- Submission on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) Impairment Tables Review
- Developing the next National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children Survey and Consultations
- Submission to the WA Government Consultation Process on the development of legislation for the authorisation of restrictive practices within disability services in Western Australia.
- Submission on the Draft Framework for the new National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women & their Children
- Submission in Response to the Draft Statement for the National Women's Safety Summit
- Submission to NDIS Consultation Paper on Supported Decision Making
- Submission to NDIS Consultation Paper on Life at Home
- WWDA Submission to the Draft Architecture Framework for the new National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women
- Submission to the Consultation on the review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act
- Submission to the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and related amendments
- Survey Submission: Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032
- Survey Submission to The Shift: Election priorities survey
- Disability Sector Letter to National Cabinet on the response to the COVID-19 Omicron variant
- Advice provided to NSW Legal Aid on redesigned Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT)
- Response to the University of Sydney National Disability Research Priorities (NDRP) Survey

- Input to the ACOSS joint disability sector letter to Urge Government To Act On DSP Senate Inquiry Report
- Detailed Submission on the Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Their Children 2022-2032
- Input to the development of the Terms of Reference for the Australian Disability Strategy Advisory Council
- Submission of WWDA's Quadrennial Report to UN ECOSOC 2017-2021 as per the requirements of WWDA's UN Status as having Special Consultative Status with the United Nations
- Submission, re-drafting and editing the DSS 'Engagement protocol for working with Disability Representative Organisations
- Submission, re-drafting and editing the DSS Draft 'National Disability Advocacy Framework 2022-2025'

Copies of WWDA Policy Submissions work can be found on our website at [www.wwda.org.au](http://www.wwda.org.au)

# THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) & THE NDIS QUALITY & SAFEGUARDS COMMISSION

During the reporting period July 2021-June 2022, WWDA has undertaken a significant amount of work related to the NDIS and the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission.

WWDA CEO, Carolyn Frohmader represents WWDA as a member of the NDIS CEO's Forum and also the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission National Consultative Committee (Disability Sector), as well as the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission National Complaints Advisory Committee.

The primary function of the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission National Consultative Committee (Disability Sector) is to provide ongoing high-level advice to the NDIS Commission on national issues, which influence the delivery of quality and safe NDIS supports and services. The Committee meets every three months, as well as undertaking work outside of the meetings.

Over the reporting period, WWDA has been heavily involved in working with the **NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission** on a wide range of work.

Over the reporting period, WWDA has developed a [series of fact sheets](#) for women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability in understanding, applying for and navigating the NDIS. These were also released in Easy English versions.

WWDA strongly supported the effort of the disability sector and community to work to abolish Independent Assessments, with this announcement coming in at the beginning of the reporting period.

## WWDA PRESENTATIONS

During the 2021-2022 reporting period, WWDA has undertaken a large number of presentations across a range of sectors and settings, to promote and advance the rights of women and girls with disability. WWDA has also partnered and collaborated with other organisations and agencies in some of these presentations and events. Just some examples of WWDA events and presentations implemented during the reporting period are provided below, with many other webinars included in various other sections of this report.

**National Women's Alliances CSW66 Briefing** – On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2022, Mali and Margherita spoke on behalf of WWDA at panellists at the National Women Alliances CSW66 virtual briefing day, discussing WWDA's priorities on the themes of climate change and disaster mitigation.

**Senate, Community Affairs References Committee Hearing on the Purpose, Intent and Adequacy of the Disability Support Pension** – WWDA spoke to the committee, giving information on the pension and the impacts it has.

**NDIS Co-design Panel** – WWDA Staff members spoke at this Hobart event organised by member Ana Pike on independent assessments and the importance of co-design with people with disability moving forward.

**AWAVA's Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experience of Gender Based Violence Webinar** – Several WWDA staff spoke about the writing of the report, and it's importance in the larger context of violence, including the importance of intersectionality.

**Global Disability Summit** – WWDA presented on the Our Site website, and staff member Margherita spoke at an event on 'Building a Better Inclusive Future shaped by the Power of Children and Youth with Disabilities' on the Global Youth Charter.

**Conference of State Parties on the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities** – WWDA held a side event on Our Site, co-design and the importance of involving the firsthand experience of women with disabilities.

**Our Watch Changing the Landscape: National resource to prevent violence against women with disabilities** – Staff member Heidi presented at the launch of these resources.

**Stop Domestic Violence Conference** – WWDA Staff hosted a panel event about Our Site, Co-design and Violence Prevention, with other panellists including other WWDA Members Deb Thomson and Akii Ngo.

**AHRC Includability Panel** – Staff member Heidi spoke at a panel on the inclusion of people with disability in the workplace

**Disability Royal Commission (DRC)** – Over the reporting period, WWDA presented on a significant number of occasions on the DRC, to educate and encourage members and non-members to get involved. WWDA also gave evidence, and supported others to give evidence.

Several of WWDA's Webinars and presentations can be found on WWDA's Webinar Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaxOITjp6E0p-boKYyXIYqg/videos>

# COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

As a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), WWDA consistently seeks out opportunities to build our capacity to meaningfully engage with our members and stakeholders. It is outside the scope of this Report to provide a narrative on all the communications and engagement work WWDA has undertaken during the reporting period, however the following information is illustrative of WWDA's extensive work in this area.

## WWDA Social Media Analytics 1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022

### Membership

Total membership: 1238

New in that financial year: 575

### Website

3000 from new users per month

The key pages for the last financial year excluding the home page was:

1 The Our work page

2 the WWDA membership page

3 Board and staff page.

### Facebook

Total Followers 16,472

Reached 252, 000 people

7000 visited our Facebook page

1056 new followers

### Twitter

Total followers 6351

Average 131,000 tweet impressions per month.

Average 12,000 twitter page visits a month.

### Insta

Insta followers 2,146

Reach 20,214

Profile visits 3,067

237 new followers

## Linked In

Total followers 476

653 page views

## Newsletter

Open rate 33.4%

Click through rate 4.8%

## WWDA Newsletters

During the reporting period, WWDA continued to produce our very successful WWDA Newsletter each month, along with our WWDA Youth Newsletter, which was produced every few months. Members can now automatically subscribe to newsletters, as well as select to subscribe when registering for events. Each Newsletter provides a range of current information, not only about the work of WWDA, but also provides up-to-date information on key Government and related initiatives, including for example: the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); COVID19; National Disability Strategy (NDS); NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission, the Disability Royal Commission, government and related inquiries and consultations and much more.

## WWDA Social Media Campaigns

During the 2021-2022 reporting period, WWDA developed and implemented over **20 targeted** social media campaigns, using a range of WWDA's platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WWDA Youth Network Facebook, WWDA Youth Twitter and WWDA Youth Instagram. Examples included:

- Our Site 2.0 - information and education
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence
- Federal Election Platform 2022
- Recruitment and Introduction of [WWDA Youth Advisory Group \(WYAG\)](#) members
- [AWAVA / WWDA Youth Young Women's Survey](#)
- COSP Vlogs and Communications
- Various DRC hearing posts for every hearing and other information
- WWDA LEAD Disability and Identity Webinar
- WWDA Leadership Statement Launch Webinar
- WWDA LEAD Peer Networking
- WWDA Youth Sunday Disability Spotlight Posts
- WWDA Intersections: LGBTQIA+ and Disability Webinar

## OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE & REPORTING

WWDA has continued to employ high standard governance and financial management practices. During the reporting year, WWDA has met all reporting and accountability requirements as well as those in relation to our funding bodies. In accordance with the constitutional requirements of the organisation, WWDA's service agreements; the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT); and the Charities Act 2013 (Cth), WWDA has undertaken a wide range of internal and external reporting and accountability requirements. During the reporting period, WWDA has also undertaken a significant amount of work in relation to governance, including financial management, human resources, and related reporting.

WWDA's sound governance, financial and organisational management practices are demonstrated through the following processes:

- Undertaking of reporting in accordance with the constitutional requirements of the organisation, WWDA's funding contract service agreements; the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT); and the Charities Act 2013 (Cth)
- Preparing and completing Annual Reporting requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- Preparing and submitting WWDA Service Agreement (and relevant Project funding contracts) Progress and Project Reports and financial acquittals
- Writing, publishing and disseminating the WWDA Annual Report
- Provision of financial reports prepared by the WWDA Accountant to the WWDA Management Committee
- Annual Auditing of financial statements by registered audit company in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and Australian Auditing Standards
- Conducting bi-monthly meetings of the WWDA Management Committee
- Conducting the WWDA Annual General Meeting
- Weekly meetings between WWDA Executive Director and the President of the WWDA Management Committee
- Conducting of annual staff performance reviews
- Review and renewal of WWDA Insurance policies
- Annual review of WWDA Strategic Plan, WWDA Management Committee Orientation Kit
- Review and updating of the WWDA Employee Handbook
- Development of a new WWDA Privacy Policy

- Development of COVID19 policies and procedures for the organisation
- Development of WWDA policies for staff working remotely

WWDA's organisational management practices and ongoing quality improvement are further supported by the services of Employsure who are available to assist WWDA to ensure our organisation maintains compliance with all employment legislation and work health and safety matters.