

Women With Disabilities Australia launches groundbreaking Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit for women and gender diverse people with disabilities.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is proud to announce the release of the **Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit**, a comprehensive resource aimed at empowering and encouraging women and gender diverse people with disabilities to step into leadership, advocacy, and decision-making roles.

This toolkit will officially launch on **Wednesday October 16th 2024**, with an online presentation event that will be shared across WWDA's social media.

Designed by and for women and gender diverse people with lived experience of disability, the toolkit offers practical guidance and strategies for participation and leadership within community and professional environments, exploring leadership in the context of individual strengths and growth. It reflects WWDA's long-standing commitment to fostering equality and amplifying the voices of those often underrepresented in leadership positions across sectors.

We hope that women and gender diverse people with disabilities throughout Australia will use this toolkit in whatever capacity applies to them, to help advocate for themselves and others in leadership roles.

"The far greater challenge is to broaden the scope of leadership to include everyone's strengths." - WWDA Member

A Response to Gaps in Leadership Representation

The Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit addresses critical gaps in leadership and decision-making representation, where women, gender diverse people and people with disabilities remain vastly underrepresented in many sectors. We know that people with disabilities are often excluded from decision-making, and rarely see

themselves in leadership roles. For many, systemic challenges such as discrimination, lack of support and inaccessible environments prevent them from taking on such roles.

This toolkit aims to change that narrative, offering support for their leadership journeys, and tools to build confidence, advocacy skills and knowledge in leadership. We believe everyone has a right to be a part of the community, make their own decisions and have a say.

WWDA CEO Sophie Cusworth expressed the importance of this project in transforming the landscape for women and gender diverse people with disabilities:

“For too long, our community has been excluded from opportunities to lead and participate, in all areas of life. We want to see a world that values the leadership of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities, and challenges harmful and false narratives about who can and can’t be a leader. This Toolkit is designed by and for our community, to equip women and gender-diverse people with disabilities with the skills and confidence to lead, participate, and influence. We want to see a future where our voices are heard, valued, and leading the way.”

The Hon. Amanda Rishworth, Minister for Social Services, addressed the government’s sentiments to this toolkit and its impact:

*“The Albanese Labor Government is deeply committed to supporting more women, including women and gender-diverse people with disability, into Board and leadership positions – and this toolkit is a great initiative for women and gender-diverse people with disability to build their leadership capacity and skills.
“We are proud to support the projects like the WWDA toolkit that empower people with disability to become leaders in their communities.”*

Key Features of the Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit

The LEAD Toolkit is made up of information and activities. You will find:

- Information about leadership and what it means to women and gender diverse people with disabilities.
 - WWDA LEAD's five Leadership Principles.
 - Information on mentoring and groups.
 - Self-paced activities focused on developing leadership skills, confidence and knowledge that can be done on your own or in a group.
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Accessibility

Women With Disabilities Australia values accessibility all of our communication and interaction with our members and the wider community. That's why the Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit was made with accessibility and inclusion as fundamental design elements. It will be available in several accessible formats, including Easy Read and Auslan translations, and be compatible with closed captioning, screen readers and adaptive assistance tools.

By providing accessible, responsive tools, WWDA is ensuring that more voices from the disability community are heard at decision-making tables. This initiative aligns with national and international movements towards gender equality, disability rights and inclusive action.

Significance in the Australian Disability Sector

The Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit is a timely resource as the disability sector in Australia continues to evolve. With growing discussions around inclusivity, disabled autonomy and leadership, this toolkit is positioned to spark a new wave of leaders and advocates.

In 2000, WWDA released its first Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit. When the LEAD project was created through ILC grants in 2019, this updated toolkit became part of a mission to provide skill building and co-design opportunities for our members.

Co-design is a valued practice at WWDA, which ensures lived experience guides development, improves accessibility, and builds a trusted community. We have worked closely with women and gender diverse people with disabilities from the WWDA community and beyond through co-design and co-production, to inform an updated and more accessible version of the Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit that prioritises cultural safety, inclusion, and wellbeing. This collaborative approach makes the toolkit more accessible, inclusive, and impactful for women and gender-diverse people with disabilities.

Join the launch event!

The official launch of the WWDA Leadership and Mentoring Toolkit will take place on **Wednesday October 16th, 2024**. The event will be available to watch on YouTube and shared across WWDA's social media platforms. The toolkit will be available for free access and download following the launch.

If you wish to promote the toolkit on your media channels, please use our digital media pack, which can be access through the link below.

[LINK to Digital Media Pack]

Contact Us

For technical issues or concerns, please contact officeadmin@wwda.org.au and you will be directed to the relevant staff member.

For media enquiries and appearances, please contact officeadmin@wwda.org.au and request Sophie Cusworth, CEO of WWDA, and/or Karin Swift, WWDA President of the Committee of Management.

About Women With Disabilities Australia

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is a national organisation that represents and advocates for the rights and interests of women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities in Australia. All of our work is made through the consultation of and co-design with people with disabilities. WWDA works to improve the lives and amplify the voices of its members, leading initiatives that promote inclusion, equality, disability rights, and social justice.