

Media release

11th October 2010

Women with disabilities more vulnerable to violence

The Victorian Government must take action to address violence against women with disabilities, according to the election statement released today by Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV).

WDV – a not for profit organisation of women with disabilities who support women with disabilities to achieve their rights – is calling on all parties to take action on this and a range of other key issues impacting Victorian women with disabilities.

“We are seeing repeated incidents of abuse reported in the media, including the appalling story we see in the Herald Sun today. Women with Disabilities Victoria has repeatedly raised concerns about the appalling rate of violence against women with disabilities for the last ten years. The community and government antipathy to this issue must stop” said Women with Disabilities Victoria Executive Director, Keran Howe. “Our research tells us that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to all forms of violence than any other group in the community”.

“And yet even though we experience such high levels of violence, we are less likely to receive access to support. This situation is simply unacceptable.”

“We have identified six key actions the Victorian Government can take to address this issue including funding the specific initiatives for women with disabilities as part of the implementation of the government’s *Right to Respect: Victoria’s Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010-2020*.”

“The release of this plan sent a strong message about every woman’s right to respect in this State. But the plan will only be able to make significant inroads to tackling violence if it’s backed up by appropriate funding.”

The WDV election statement also calls for changes to the health care sector to stamp out discrimination against women with disabilities and changes to the planning of other essential services such as housing.

“Despite women with disabilities spending a greater proportion of their income on medical care, they often face discrimination and miss out on services women without disabilities take for granted, such as cervical or breast screening programs,” said Ms Howe.

“But health care is not the only sector we face discrimination in. Our research tells us that women with disabilities are experiencing disadvantage across a broad range of areas every day in this State.

“We are calling on all parties to commit to the simple, but powerful actions outlined in our election statement and work together with us to ensure women with disabilities are no longer treated like second class citizens.”

For Victorian women, the rate of disability is 20.1 per cent of the population and the rate of profound or severe disability is 7.1 per cent of the population.

It has been demonstrated extensively that people with disabilities experience significant discrimination in relation to employment, housing, education, transport, income and violence - and this disadvantage is compounded for women with disabilities.

The WDV election statement is available on the WDV website www.wdv.org.au

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Media contact: Keran Howe, Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Victoria
Mob: 0408 808676, Ph: 9664 9340 email:keran.howe@wdv.org.au