

Victorian Women With Disabilities Network Newsletter

Edition 3, May-June 2009



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VWDN Board 08/09

Margaret Bayly
Catherine Brooks
Wendy Brooks (Co-Chair)
Sharon Granek
Tricia Malowney (Co-Chair)
Effie Meehan
Delia Portlock
Margaret Stevens (Treasurer)

Advisor to the Board

Dominique Saunders

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Keran Howe, *Executive Officer*
Kate Hood, *Policy Officer*
Sarah Boyd, *Information & Administration Officer*

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From the Executive Officer

A Message from the Chairs

In 2005 WHV and VWDN signed a partnership to work together in a mutually beneficial relationship to assist the organisations to jointly progress an advocacy agenda on issues critical to women's health and for women with disabilities. Many areas of work have emerged since 2005, including the development of the advocacy information service with DHS recurrent funding. For this work WHV took on the responsibility of fund holder whilst significant organisational development within VWDN was undertaken.

At 1st July 2009 VWDN has taken over as fund holder responsibility and is wholly accountable for the funds and delivery of the service whilst remaining co-located with WHV. This goal has been achieved after 6 years of complex work by many people. It is a unique example of collaborating to create sustainable ways and means for the voices of marginalised women to be heard on issues of importance to their health and human rights

The Board of the VWDN would like to acknowledge the excellent support WHV has provided to us in getting the service to this stage in its development. There are many exciting developments taking place at VWDN and to the future and to continuing to grow as the body representing women with disabilities in Victoria.



Wendy Brooks

Chair (Governance)



Tricia Malowney

Chair (Representation)



Keran Howe, Executive Officer

Hello all,

Welcome to the June edition of our VWDN Newsletter. This newsletter gives you an update on some of the exciting things that VWDN has been up to over the last two months. In particular it focuses on an issue that is at the heart of VWDN's work -representation.

What makes things work?

I recently attended a workshop on Leadership facilitated by Meg Wheatley. Meg founded the Berkhana Institute in 1992. This Institute is founded on the view that a community can be strengthened by drawing on its own wisdom, experience and environment. This certainly holds true for women with disabilities as a community. The workshop brainstormed a list, drawing on the wisdom of the group present. The list was a list of what makes community action work. The list that the participants arrived at is found to be a universal list found to be true across cultures and communities:

Creating a sustainable community

- The power of networks and relationships
- Shifting power and accountability toward the community of interest
- Trust
- A supportive environment for everyone
- Communication: bringing others along; respectful listening

Qualities of the individual

- Self belief and motivation to see yourself in the bigger picture
- Being able to assume your own authority
- Being enthused about the possibilities
- Acting with integrity
- Being a pioneer, a risk-taker; trying something new and dwelling in the uncertainty
- Being able to consult your own experience





- Perseverance

Methods and strategies

- Having a Vision
- Measuring the right things
- Using the energy of a crisis
- Being grounded in real life experience
- Consistency and reliability
- A space to reflect, rather than finding a quick fix, using the opportunity for group learning
- Expertise and resources

I think this is a great list. It certainly reflects the things we think are important at VWDN - drawing on the wisdom of our members, being grounded in our own experience as women with disabilities, speaking out for what we believe in and stopping every now and then to take stock of where we are going.

This leads me to the issue of Representation. Representation the issues that concern women with disabilities is our core business. It helps us to realize our vision of “a world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.” We believe that this vision will be achieved when women with disabilities can participate fully in whatever ways we can and want to.

How do we represent women with disabilities?

Representation is about the voice of women with disabilities being at the table where decisions are made, being present and heard at community forums, putting our point of view and increasing understanding of what it means to live in the world where there are many barriers to our full participation. Being a representative is one way of participating in the community and at the same time it is a way of creating change that means other women with disabilities can participate more fully in the future. Challenging barriers to accessing the most basic health services, like having a pap smear (if we must!). Challenging services who say ‘we can’t help you, we don’t have the resources to support women with disabilities’. Making sure that support like individualized

support packages are responsive to women with disabilities as parents. These are all ways in which we represent women with disabilities. Our members play an important role in representation. We have members on a number of regular committees. A key part of our work is to mentor and support our representatives in this work. Over the last few months we have been particularly focused on supporting our representatives who will sit on sub committees to develop the Victorian violence prevention plan. Benda Gabe, Kate Hood, Jody Saxton and Margaret Stevens are our representatives on these sub committees. They have attended a number of training days at VWDN and DVRC to learn more about what violence prevention means for women with disabilities. For more information see Brenda Gabe’s article on her experience of representation and what it means to her on page 5.

VWDN has developed a series of new policies to guide our work. One of these is a policy on representation. This policy outlines what is expected of representatives and how they will be supported by VWDN. For any new representation opportunities we will be sending invitations to all our members and asking anyone interested in being a VWDN rep to send in a brief application. Representatives will be selected on merit, availability and skills required to fulfill the committee position. Representatives of VWDN are expected to uphold the objects, values and principles of the organization and will receive the support of the organisation, including the appointment of a mentor, and training as appropriate. Members must feel comfortable representing the organisations views on issues and will be provided with suitable background information on the topic, the Strategic Plan, and other resources to support this.

If you would like to read our policy on Representation go to:

www.vwdn.org.au/policies.html.





If you would like to be a representative of VWDN get in touch with us at vwdn@vwdn.org.au.

Kate is leaving

Kate Hood has decided to tender her resignation as Policy Officer (Violence against women with disabilities). Kate joined us in November 2008 and has made a significant contribution advocating on the issue of violence against women with disabilities and supporting our representatives on the Violence prevention program. We are very sorry to see Kate leave this role, we wish her well and we are happy that she will continue to contribute to VWDN in other ways.

Read on to find out more of what we've been up to. And if you have a story of your own you would like to share with us please send it to our Editor at vwdn@vwdn.org.au.

Policy Officer's News

Hello All,

As usual, it has been a busy time for the VWDN since I last connected with you all. We have been focusing our attention on our mentoring programme for our Members – we are hoping to extend it, and find more women with disabilities to represent the VWDN in the future.

Our Reps for the State Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and I did the Train the Trainer workshops at DVRCV. These workshops were held over two days and focused on how we can use our own experience, both personal and professional, to communicate with a range of workers about the importance of connecting the areas of disability and family violence. A range of techniques were taught which would enhance and focus a training session and help our trainers to deliver an engaging and informative training session on this subject. The diversity of experience of the participants made for a satisfying and sometimes challenging experience

As a part of adding to our mentoring programme, I have met with Jane Ashton from the Vic Health Media Project to talk about her media training programme, and how we might collaborate with her to train our Reps to present to Media. She is very interested in making contact with any of our members who might be interested in presenting to the media. This could be an important extension of our mentoring programme and a way of keeping the issue of violence against women with disabilities in the public mind. If anyone is interested in doing some training with Jane, you can e-mail her: jane.a@wdvcs.org.au or phone her on: (03) 99289614

I was also invited by Chris Jennings at DVRCV to observe some training for women with intellectual disabilities. The training was conducted at SARU and was designed to inform women with intellectual disabilities about violence and sexual abuse. The women themselves spoke with enthusiasm about presenting what they had learned to women with intellectual disabilities living in Community Residential Units (CRUs). We feel that this would be an excellent way for women to connect with one another and collaborate on the issues that affect women with disabilities who live in Community Residential Units.

Recently, I also participated as a guest speaker for the Partners in Prevention Network Meeting, held on 18 June at Ross House.

As you can see, the VWDN really wants to move ahead with engaging our women with disabilities to represent themselves and others on the issue of violence against women with disabilities. If you are interested in becoming a Rep, please contact the VWDN on: (03) 9664 9317

Now to some rather sad news. Due to persistent health problems, I have made the decision to leave the VWDN. Unfortunate as this is, I feel that it is the right decision under the circumstances. I have enjoyed my time





here very much, especially the work I have done with our Reps and the face-to-face connections I have made with many of you. I consider myself privileged to have had the opportunity to have worked for the VWDN and to have known you. I have learned a great deal, and will take that learning with me into the rest of my working life. So thank you all. I hope our paths cross again.

Finally, I want to say keep up the good work! You are an amazing, feisty bunch of women, and I hope that your great humanity and perseverance leads to good and just outcomes for women with disabilities now and into the future.

With great respect and fondness,
Kate Hood,
Policy Officer



Meet the Board - Simone Rutherford, VWDN Treasurer

Simone is the newest member of the VWDN Board and she has additionally taken on the role of Treasurer, succeeding four years of fantastic service by Margaret Stevens. Simone spoke recently about her thoughts on VWDN, her work as an MS Volunteer and her appointment as Treasurer.



When I was given the opportunity to join the VWDN Board I felt honoured to be considered and the work for

VWDN seemed a good fit with my existing activities as both a volunteer and Advocate with the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society.

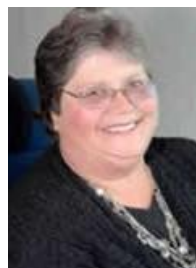
I was diagnosed with MS in 2004 following years of unexplained fatigue, numbness, pain, dizziness and a host of other symptoms. The following year I began volunteering and I've since become an MS Advocate as well. This latter role has led to many meetings with local and Federal politicians on issues affecting people with all disabilities and my most recent

activities in this area have been preparing a submission on the National Disability Strategy and on the Disability Parking Scheme.

I was surprised but very excited and flattered to be asked to join the VWDN Board and I look forward to the challenges this will bring. I'm also looking forward to working with a wide range of colleagues, clients and stakeholders who are all striving to achieve VWDN's mission of *"Leading the way for Victorian women with disabilities and improving women's choices by building partnerships and providing support, information and community education."*

In terms of my professional background, I have around 20 years' experience in finance, both in Australia and overseas. I currently work for the Melbourne-based, national wholesale and retail menswear chain GAZ MAN. My academic background includes a Bachelor of Business majoring in Accounting from RMIT and I'm also a full member of CPA Australia.

Representative's Contribution..



Brenda's speaking out against violence!

The Victorian State Government is taking a whole of Government approach to

develop a State Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women.

Violence against women with disabilities occurs at a far higher rate than that experienced by other women generally so it is really important the voice of women with disabilities is heard on this issue. I have a passion for social inclusion and I believe everyone should be able to participate in their community, and to feel safe wherever they are and whatever they are doing, whether it's in their own home or in the community.

The State Plan will be developed across five key areas: workplaces; sport and recreation; education; media arts and popular culture; and Local Government, Health and Community





Services. I will be representing women with disabilities through the VWDN in the area of Local Government, Health and Community Services. This working group fits well with my experience with Monash City Council Disability Consultative Committee and a number of other Monash City Council committees, and also my work on the Board of MonashLink Community Health Service and as President of Mulgrave Neighbourhood House.

I first started to get involved working for the rights of people with disabilities when I did a leadership course through Leadership Plus. This gave me the confidence to speak out about disability issues.

I have since been able to undergo a two-day training course at Domestic Violence Resource Centre that was directly targeted preventing violence against women with disabilities. This really got me thinking about violence and how it affects women with disabilities.

In the lead up to representing VWDN, I have attended several meetings with Kate Hood, VWDN's Policy Officer, and the women who are representing VWDN in the other streams, Margaret Stevens and Jody Saxton. This support is ongoing and is invaluable in equipping me with the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable me to go forward and present the case of women with disabilities to other members of the Working party. I wish to thank VWDN for the training and ongoing support that they have provided to assist me in this role.

Brenda Gabe

Announcements

VWDN / WHIN / FAIR Forum

Don't forget to come along to our big event.

A forum presented by Victorian Women with Disabilities Network, Northern Integrated Family Violence Services and the Family Violence Actioning Interdisciplinary Research Project, University of Melbourne.

Working with Women with Disabilities Experiencing Violence

A forum for workers in the Disability & Family Violence sectors

Tuesday 21st July 2009

10:00 – 3:00

Northcote Town Hall, High Street, Northcote

Featuring:

Keynote Speaker: Dr Gill Hague, Bristol University, UK Chair, Violence Against Women Research Group, Co-author 'Making the Links: Disabled Women and Domestic Violence', *SAFE: The Domestic Abuse Quarterly*, Summer, (pp. 1-5), 2008

- Panel of women speaking about their experiences
- Examples of best practice in local areas

Due to generous sponsorship this event is free to participants. Translation, transport and personal requirements catered for.

To register please send a completed registration form by Thursday 9th July to:

Sally Johnston, Women's Health In the North

By post: 680 High Street, Thornbury 3071

By fax: 03 9484 1844

By e-mail: info@whin.org.au

Enquiries: 039484 1666





Website – what’s new?

As part of the transition to being its own fund holder, VWDN recently moved across its Advocacy Information Service pages from where they were being hosted on the Women’s Health Victoria website. This move now sees all material neatly consolidated under the one title (VWDN) and location (www.vwdn.org.au).

Along with the addition of Advocacy Information Service pages there have also been several technical improvements made to the VWDN site. “Breadcrumbs”, which help visitors to track their current location by showing the path they have taken to get there, and Google Analytics, a feature that provides useful statistical information about web traffic and activity, have both been recently added.

Furthermore, we are now in the process of updating the content of our site and uploading more information for members and visitors to access (including editions of the Newsletter!).

We are now in a position to more regularly maintain the website and continue to develop its potential for our membership and the community.



Your ‘Webmistress’

Sarah Boyd

Websites of the Month

Health Issues Centre

<http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/>

Check out their brand new website!

*A number of our members are representatives are on Health Issues Centre committees.

“Health Issues Centre is an independent, not-for-profit, non government organisation that began in 1985 to promote equity and consumer perspectives in the Australian health system. Our mission is to improve the health outcomes for Australians, especially those who are disadvantaged. The focus of Health Issues

Centre's work is mainly in Victoria but we take a national approach where appropriate. We work with a wide range of consumers, health providers, researchers, governments and other health organisations to achieve this through:

- policy analysis and advocacy from consumer and equity perspectives
- consumer-focused research
- promoting and supporting consumer participation
- disseminating information”

(source: HIC website)

Arts Access Australia

<http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org>

New website launched! Check out the new site and offer your feedback.

YMCA Access for All Abilities website

http://www.victoria.ymca.org.au/cpa/htm/htm_article.asp?page_id=300

Check out the YMCA's *Access for All Abilities* Website, which includes information for the Shire of Yarra Ranges, the City of Melbourne and Wyndham City Council.

Events and Opportunities

Experiencing barriers to Board membership?

The Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW) are inviting women to complete an anonymous questionnaire for those who have been trying to get into directorships on public and private and non-profit boards and are experiencing barriers. The information you provide will help the Centre for Leadership for Women understand the difficulties and aspirations of women who wish to get into boards of companies. Your information will also help formulate strategies to help women, as well as lobby political networks to undertake further research and development to address issues in this area.





Click here to be taken directly to the survey:
<http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au/Women%20on%20Boards%20Survey.htm>

The Survey **will close on 12 August 2009** and the evaluated results will form a Report that will be available freely through CLW.

A National Disability Insurance Scheme

A planned, fully-funded, National Disability Insurance Scheme would provide free and ready access to all the services and equipment needed by people who have or acquire a significant or complex disability and their families. This would change the way services are funded in Australia. Go to www.natdis.com.au to have your say, sign the petition and find out more information.

Family Violence Group Work Calendar for northern region

Women's Health In the North have just released their latest family violence support groups calendar for the northern region. The calendar is for Term 3 2009, which runs from 13th July to 18th September.

If you would like to know more about the support groups, a copy of the calendar and/or to be added to the WHIN mail out list, please contact Cathy Lancaster at caphl@whin.org.au.

Employment and Training Opportunities

Women with Disabilities invited to participate in Multi-Media Project

The Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria has received funding to expand its successful media advocacy project to include the voices of women with disabilities who have experienced family violence.

Have you ever wanted to speak out about family violence? To raise awareness- to challenge the ignorance and indifference of the wider community? Have you felt frustrated by

some of the inaccurate or sensationalized reporting of family violence by the media?

We are looking for women with disabilities who may be interested in training to be media advocates. Speaking out, not only about family violence, but also about the additional barriers women with disabilities face when living with or leaving abusive situations and/or environments. Training around key family violence messages; self care; working with the media and public speaking will be covered.

For a copy of our expression of interest form please contact Jane Ashton, or leave a message, on 9928 9614 or email jane.a@wdvcs.org.au.

Leadership Plus calling for Applications for their 2010 leadership program

Applications close on the 11th September 2009

Leadership Plus is an initiative of the community sector that promotes people with disabilities as leaders.

Their Mission is to develop and promote people with disabilities as leaders in society and in the workplace.

You can download a copy of the Leadership Plus 2010 Program [here](#) and an Application form [here](#) (through the DARU website).

For more information contact Anita via email at: administration@leadershipplus.com.

Internship for University Students

The Australian Employers' Network on Disability runs a unique internship program for university students with disability called "Stepping into...". The program provides uni students who have a disability the opportunity to complete *a minimum of 4 weeks paid work experience with one of their leading member organisations.*





This year programs are available for students from the disciplines of Law, Accounting, Information Technology, Human resources, Public Policy and Research, and Marketing. To be eligible students must have a disability and be in their final or penultimate year of their degree.

For full eligibility criteria, additional information and application forms please visit the website at:

http://www.aend.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=2&id=6&Itemid=23

ANZ lead the way with Abilities Program

ANZ Abilities Program: Target to recruit 35 people with a disability 30 September 2009

ANZ believe it is important to understand their customers, and as over 20% of the Australian population currently have a disability, they are striving to reflect the makeup of the communities in which they operate. As part of ANZ's broader diversity initiatives that centres on an inclusive workforce. ANZ plans to recruit 35 people with a disability into their organisation by 30 September 2009 and are well on their way to achieving this target.

ANZ appreciate that there are exceptionally talented people within their chosen profession who may have experienced barriers to employment due to accessibility.

ANZ would love to hear from people with a disability who have an interest in working for their organisation. For a confidential discussion about the Abilities Program, what it's about and to discuss current professional opportunities that are available, please contact:

Joel Kilgour
ANZ Abilities Program Manager
Phone: 03 8685 5368,
Email: Joel.Kilgour@anz.com.

Cross-Cultural Awareness & Communication Training 2009

(Northern & South East Regions)
Book now

Working effectively with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is paramount in the community services sector. There are an increasing number of people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds and Victoria has an aging CALD population.

Cultural awareness training can provide an insight into service barriers as well as improve communication and service quality. These short courses aim to provide participants with the awareness and communication skills to work effectively and sensitively with the CALD community.

Course Details:

Cost: \$110.00 per person

Comprehensive Participant notes, language / dialect map, certificate of attendance, morning or afternoon tea

Duration: 3 hours

All participants will be provided with current resources and practical tips that can be used immediately.

Registration: registrations can be made via email: jodie@prioletticonsultants.com.au
Or phone: 0438 846 584
Web: www.prioletticonsultants.com.au

Forums & Workshops

Disability Inclusive Development - Capacity Development & Networking Forum

Thursday 16th and Friday 17th July 2009

Melbourne

This two day Forum is being hosted by the CBM-Nossal Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development, AFDO and ADDC.

The forum is open to all those interested in disability and development, in particular





international development workers, disability practitioners, contractors, DPO's and students.

Full Fee: \$140.00 per day or \$250.00 for two days

Concession: \$80.00 per day and \$150.00 for two days

Venue: Lecture theatre 1, basement, 221 Bouverie Street, Carlton.

Contact: Joni Law, Nossal *Institute for Global Health* (03) 8344 0914 Email: jycl@unimelb.edu.au

Health Issues Centre - Consumer Participation in Research

Health Issues Centre is providing a training program on consumer participation in research for people affected by cancer (cancer consumers and carers). The main aim of the project is to build the skills and knowledge of cancer consumers and carers to work in collaboration with cancer researchers in Victoria.

Saturday, 25 and Sunday, 26 July 2009

Saturday, 15 and Sunday, 16 August 2009

10.00am to 4.00pm

Contact: Tere Dawson, Health Issues Centre
Ph: 9479 5827

Email: t.dawson@healthissuescentre.org.au.

Health Issues Centre Workshops for 2009

- Consulting Consumers
20 July 2009, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
- Human Rights and Health Care
4 August 2009, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
- Involving Consumers on Committees
27 October 2009, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Cost: \$150 (GST inclusive)

Venue: Victoria University Conference Centre, Level 12, 300 Flinders Street Melbourne

Enquiries: Assunta Morrone
9479 3520 or 9479 5827
a.morrone@healthissuescentre.org.au

Disability and Sexuality Forum

1pm - 4pm, Wednesday 29 July

This thought provoking forum will explore the sexual needs and wants of people with a disability. Discussion will include barriers and issues faced by people with disabilities in the area of sexuality. Participants will be provided with an opportunity to share ideas, network and meet people currently working in the sex industry.

Cost: \$55

Karralyka Centre, Mines Road, Ringwood East

Please complete the online registration form.

Contact: Maree Ireland

Phone: 03 8686 5621

Email: maree.ireland@field.org.au

Website: <http://www.field.org.au/>

Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria have two forums coming up:

'Taking the fear out of IT'

A lecture by acclaimed author and speaker Bev Aisbett.

Having suffered from severe anxiety in the past, Bev's subsequent recovery led to her offering help as an author, counselor and survivor to the many who suffer from anxiety, depression and OCD.

7:30 – 9:00pm, Wednesday 26 August

Kingston City Hall, Level 3, Function Room B, 985 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin.

\$20.00 non-members and \$10.00 ADAVIC members.

Website: <http://www.adavic.org.au/>.

and..

A stress vulnerability model of mental illnesses including a psychological model of escalating anxiety.





**1.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Saturday, 4th July 2009**

Mark Salter, Clinical Psychologist, and Eva Savov-Tancev, ADAVIC Representative.

Berwick Neighbourhood House, 112 High Street, Berwick (Senior Citizens Hall)

\$20.00 non-members and \$10.00 ADAVIC members

MS Society – Education and Information sessions

The MS Society in Victoria runs numerous free supportive information and education sessions.

See their website to find out more:

<http://www.mssociety.org.au/live/education-vic.asp>.

Free Basic Computer Classes

WIRE provides free, basic computer and internet lessons that can be tailored to meet your individual interests and needs. With only four women in a class our volunteer computer tutors can go along with you at your own pace and give you as much attention as you need. We can cover the absolute basics, including:

Each course runs for four weeks with weekly, two hour classes on Tuesdays or Fridays from 11am to 1pm.

Call WIC on 9921 0878 to book your place - It's FREE!

Download a flyer

http://www.wire.org.au/womens_info/Computer_classesA4.pdf

Conferences

ACSO Forensic Disability Conference

The 4th Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) Forensic Disability Conference will be held in Melbourne on **15 - 17 July, 2009.**

For program, registration and accommodation, click here:

<http://www.acso.com.au/docs/ACSConf.pdf>.

Women's Housing Futures Conference - Inaugural Event

This conference will consider the impact of current economic conditions and changing demographics on women of all ages and identify priorities for the development of responsive public policy. Many women are sandwiched between the high cost of housing, which reduces affordability, and the low rental vacancy rate, which increases the cost of rent.

The conference will also consider the broader issue of career development for women within the housing sector.

9.00 am – 4:00pm, Tuesday, 4 August 2009

ZINC at Federation Square (cnr Flinders & Swanston St Melbourne VIC 3000)

www.zincfedsq.com.au

Subsidized Cost:

Full rates: \$115 GST inclusive

email: holly.mullaney@chfv.org.au.

Ph: 03 9654 6077.

VCOSS Congress 2009: Protecting Social Equity When The Going Gets Tough

Congress will be held on **Thursday 6 August and Friday 7 August** at the RACV Club, 501 Bourke St, Melbourne.

This year's congress will explore the challenges and opportunities for promoting social equity during the economic downturn.

Featuring Clare Martin, ACOSS CEO and former Northern Territory Chief Minister, and Julia Unwin, Chief Executive Officer of the UK's Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Congress will bring together government and non-for-profit policy-makers, community sector leaders, academics and philanthropists.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.vcooss.org.au/>





44th Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability (ASSID) Conference “Power and Passion: Progress through Partnerships”

Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart

4 – 6 November 2009

See website for all information:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/44assid2009/>

Contact: Brigitte Cunningham

Phone: 03 6234 7844

Email: brigitte@leishman-associates.com.au

2009 Making Links Conference - Sustaining Communities in Tough Times

Melbourne

The Making Links 2009 conference asks how non-profit organisations are meeting the twin challenge of the *global economic crisis* and *environmental sustainability*. Held on the **17-18 November** the conference attracts delegates and presenters from many fields including health, environment, education, charities, business, government, philanthropy, human services and non-profits working with marginalised groups.

For more information, go to:

www.makinglinks.org.au.

The conference is currently calling for submissions.

Awards, Funding and grants

Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples' Education Fund (ADIPEF)

This newly launched fund - set up by renowned disability advocate Frank Hall-Bentick, with the assistance of his sisters and friends - will assist people with disability gain empowerment through access to formal and informal education programs.

This educational fund is looking to distribute small quarterly grants of up to \$2,500 to assist

people with disabilities to continue their learning.

For further information visit the ADIPEF

Website: <http://www.adipef.org.au/>

Donations most welcome.

Telstra Business Women's Awards – Nominations close soon!

Since its inception in 1995, the Telstra Business Women's Awards program has recognised over 400 amazing business women from all fields of business.

To nominate yourself or other inspirational business women visit:

<http://www.telstrabusinesswomensawards.com/> or call 1800 817 536 during business hours.

Nominations close 10 July, 2009.

In the Media

New VWDN Bulletin on Violence Against Women with Disabilities

The Victorian Women with Disabilities Network (VWDN) has just released its first edition of *The Bulletin* (May/June), a new bi-monthly publication that seeks to highlight the connection between family violence and disability.

If you are interested in receiving this Bulletin please contact Kate Hood, VWDN Policy Officer at: kate.hood@vwdn.org.au. The latest issue can also be downloaded from the VWDN website at www.vwdn.org.au.

! VWDN Members in the News !

Two of our Board members have made the news recently with regard to some of the serious risks and barriers encountered by people with disabilities with the Victorian transport system.

Wendy Brooks

Next tram years away for disabled travellers

The Age (p.5), 27/04/09





<http://www.theage.com.au/national/next-tram-years-away-for-disabled-travellers-20090426-ajes.html>

Margaret Stevens

Death levels argument to fix crossing

Whitehorse Leader (p.3), 06/05/09

Simone Rutherford

Multiple Sclerosis: A lifelong journey

MS Australia publication

If you would like us to email you a copy of the previous two articles, please contact Sarah at sarah.boyd@vwdn.org.au.

The Rudd Govt and mental health: how they're gift wrapping an empty box

[Crikey.com](http://crikey.com) 15/06/09

After wading through the waffle of the latest National Mental Health Policy, Australian Doctor's political editor Paul Smith is less than impressed.

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/2009/06/15/the-rudd-govt-and-mental-health-how-theyre-giftwrapping-an-empty-box/>

Absence of 'gender lens' in State and National Mental Health Policies

Editorial by Heather Clarke, Victorian Women and Mental Health Network, a member of VWDN

Because Mental Health Matters, the Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy, 2009-2019 (DHS, 2009) was released earlier this year. A comprehensive document, (167 pages in length), it contains only a brief acknowledgement of gender differences resulting in a largely gender neutral policy and service plan. This is despite submissions by the Victorian Women and Mental Health Network (VWMHN) and other women's health organizations which highlighted the evidence for the need for a gendered perspective.

Disappointingly, it also omits any significant reference to the work to increase gender sensitivity in adult acute inpatient units being undertaken by other sections within DHS such as the Mental Health and Drugs Division and the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist. Two reports produced by the VWMHN (Nowhere to be Safe, 2008 and Gathering Information about Clinical Mental Health Service Initiatives to increase Safety and Gender Sensitivity, 2009) informed by the experiences of both women and staff, highlight a continuing lack of safety and many incidents of physical and sexual harassment and assault in mixed psychiatric inpatient units.

The virtual absence of recognition of gender as a determinant of mental health in this recent state government mental health policy highlights the need for strong policy leadership at a national level. Disappointingly however, any reference to gender impacts are also appear to be absent from the National Mental Health Policy (2008). Hopefully the Fourth National Mental Health Plan, 2009-2014 which is currently being developed will address these omissions.

Support in short supply for disabled

The Australian 07/05/09

Bruce Bonyhady co-authored the submission to the 2020 summit on the NDIS and is chairman of Yooralla, Victoria's largest disability service provider.

'AUSTRALIA'S disability support system is inequitable, fractured, under-resourced and slowly collapsing under the weight of its own inadequacies, while sub-optimally consuming billions of dollars of taxpayers' money each year.'

Full article:

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25439463-7583,00.html>





Mental problems jump 9pc

Siobhain Ryan, [The Australian](#) 12/05/09

THE number of Australians reporting long-term mental and behavioural problems has risen by 200,000 in the past three years.

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics yesterday show a 9 per cent jump in the prevalence of mental ill health between 2004-05 and 2007-08, to 2.3 million from 2.1 million.

The number of Australians popping pills and potions for depression, anxiety and insomnia has skyrocketed over the same period. The proportion of people using prescription drugs, herbal supplements or vitamins for mental wellbeing almost doubled from 19 per cent to 37 per cent.

For the full article, go to:

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25465417-2702,00.html>

Making the education revolution accessible for everyone

AHRC Website: Media Release, Friday 5 June 2009

Little snippet in from the media Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, has congratulated the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and her Department on the preparation of a fact sheet on the interaction of proposed new Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards (Premises Standards) and the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program.

“It is very important that students with a disability, and their teachers and parents who may also have a disability, have the greatest possible access to the school environment and I want to congratulate the Minister and her Department for this initiative,” said Mr Innes.

Contact: Brinsley Marlay
02 9284 9656 / 0430 366

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/aboutmedia/media_releases/2009/47_09.html.

Justice emerges for the most vulnerable victims in media

Adele Horin, [SMH](#) 01/06/09

A women with an intellectual disability achieves justice against the bus driver who sexually assaulted her.

Click here to read the article:

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/justice-emerges-for-the-most-vulnerable-victims-20090531-brqe.html>

Urgent action needed to tackle violence towards disabled people, says report in media

Mary O’Hara, [guardian.co.uk](#), 29/04/09

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/apr/29/disability-violence-abuse-report>

The *Report* can be found here (although the site appears to be currently down):

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Pages/disabilitytargetedviolence.aspx>

Women with disabilities not getting a fair go

Media Release, House of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations (Chair – Sharryn Jackson MP), 3 June 2009

“Australians with a disability are much less likely to be employed than people without a disability” and furthermore “...women with disabilities are at a further disadvantage because of the combined discrimination based on gender and discrimination based on disability” so say Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) in their submission to the House of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations Committee’s inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce.





In its submission WWDA identify a number of barriers to entering employment for women with disabilities which include:

- Lack of understanding of the complexity and nature of disability;
- Lack of access to education and training;
- Inaccessible and unresponsive employment services; and
- Poor job design and inflexible working arrangements.

“The Committee looks forward to discussing possible strategies and solutions to addressing the challenges that face women with a disability when entering or re-entering the workforce” said Ms Sharryn Jackson, Committee Chair.

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the Committee’s website at <http://www.apf.gov.au/ewr>, by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4162 or emailing ewr.reps@apf.gov.au.

This article can be found at: <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/ewr/p/ayequity/media/media17.pdf>

Standing up for the ones who have to sit
Jane Nicholls, The Age 30/05/09

PICTURE this: you are strolling down a quiet side street. A man unknown to you, kids in tow, is walking in your direction on the opposite footpath.

He stops, bends over, grinning. "How are we today, then?" He addresses you loudly, across the road. He uses that high, sing-song register usually reserved for very young children. In the chemist's you take a moment to find your wallet. "Take your time, dear!" says the sales assistant, in similar honey-pitched tones. "No rush! Can I help you?"

Of course, neither incident would ever happen - unless, like me, you are in a wheelchair or a battery-powered buggy.

"Nowadays people in wheelchairs aren't patronised," someone assured me.

"How long have you spent in a wheelchair?" I ask.

In my case, the answer is six months - since I suddenly had my right leg amputated following a rare and unexplained arterial embolism.

Now I am walking, tentatively, on a prosthesis. As an upright person, albeit one who leans on a stick and sports a noticeable limp, the difference in the treatment I receive is astounding. As if by magic I am back among the ranks of those who command ordinary human respect.

Unless I can't avoid it, I have decided, I will never appear in public except vertically. Even crutches are preferable to the condescension I cop if I get about in "seated-wheeled" mode. At least I have the choice.

The automatic gear change in response to my "wheeled" status was something I didn't expect.

I am in my 50s, a professional woman who has always attracted the regard that, in egalitarian Australia, is mutual in adult interactions. I am fiercely proud of this national social attribute. Now I know what many with disabilities have long known - even in enlightened Australia, obvious physical difference brings with it a whole basket of unwelcome, unwarranted assumptions and prejudices.

Yes, people are kind and they want to help. I acknowledge with gratitude the kindness I have been shown, but the very people who offer assistance can easily get it wrong. Too often, their goodwill is sullied by unconscious beliefs that stereotype and demean.

In the past I must have been guilty of these errors myself.

According to the stereotype, the seated, wheeled me is childlike, ignorant and unintelligent.

I have been admonished to "take it carefully" when wheeling myself around the fruit shop; helpfully informed that there is something





called "Medicare" that subsidises health costs; asked if I can read the labels in the supermarket.

In public, I've learnt never to fumble or to appear confused: in the past, this caused mild annoyance at most, but now, as evidence of my generalised incapacity, such hesitation becomes the business of every do-gooder in sight.

And I've learnt not to show impatience, never to be grumpy. Before, as a "standing" person, my occasional bad mood was tolerated: now I must exhibit unflinching cheer, grace and humility. We wheeled citizens had better appreciate others' Samaritan actions, lest our ingratitude causes offence!

I wonder what would have happened to my personality if I'd been faced with a lifetime of these implied insults. I am not unusually strong: perhaps I'd give up, fall into passive behaviour that meets the low expectations of others. Nor am I a saint: maybe I'd become a misfit, angry at the world, unable to accept, when offered it, genuine friendship or real respect.

Responses to physical disability are not just uninformed, but laced with primitive fear. Each one of us could become paralysed or lose limbs - we aren't sure how we would cope. This ignorance, this fear, remains hidden until it happens to you: someone with an obvious disability cops it full in the face.

I am just a person: happy and unhappy in the ordinary way. Nevertheless I am the manifestation of everybody's nightmares. We with visible disabilities are thrust away, treated like children, because no one wants to acknowledge us as equals. That's too threatening.

The lessons have been hard ones. My family and friends have accompanied me through the shock of my sudden loss, vanquished their own demons and come out as heroes. I thank them with all my love.

To those with disabilities whom I unwittingly patronised in the past, I apologise unreservedly.

Jane Nicholls is a Melbourne writer.

New Funding For 13 Disability Advocacy Providers

Media Release – The Hon. Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, 10th June 2009

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten, announced increased funding for 13 disability advocacy providers as part of the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP). The providers will have their Australian Government funding increased to \$100,000 to allow them to provide increased disability advocacy support for people with disability, their families and carers.

To read this media release in full [click here](#).

Resources

Your right to a fair go! Factsheet on discrimination if you have a disability or impairment

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission

The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission has developed its "Your right to a fair go – discrimination based on disability/impairment" factsheet in Braille, CD and large print formats. The Commission is also developing this factsheet in an Easy English format. Easy English means the information is written in an 'easy to read' way, using photos and illustrations to highlight key points. Also available in accessible formats is our "**Your right to rights**" brochure, which explains the Human Rights Charter.

To order a free copy, call the Commission on (03) 92817122 or email

education@veohrc.vic.gov.au website:

www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

UNDP releases report - 'Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: At the Intersection of Discrimination.' 09/06/09

According to the website:

This study aims to identify the issues and challenges faced by women and girls with





disabilities in the Pacific and to analyse social and economic factors impacting on their human rights. Women and girls with disabilities experience disadvantages and discrimination based on the combination of both disability and gender-based discrimination, known as 'intersectional discrimination'.

Click on this link for the PDF Report:
<http://www.undppc.org.fj/resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf>.

Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence

New ABS Information Paper

Click here to access the PDF file:
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailedPage/4529.02009?OpenDocument>

Fact sheets on Victoria's new family violence laws and tenancies

Consumer Affairs Victoria have created two new fact sheets for support workers, tenants and landlords to understand how Victoria's family violence laws can affect residential tenancies.

Information on this topic has been published on the CAV website. [For tenants click here.](#)

Time for Action Report

The National Council's Plan for Australia to reduce Violence Against Women and their Children

The full report, background document, summary and current actions are now available for download from:
http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/Pages/default.aspx

Human Rights of People with Disabilities - Harvard Resources

The Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD) now has the following resources available for free download:

1. *We have Human Rights*, a Handbook with an easy to read explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. *Change your Life with Human Rights*, an easy to read explanation of how to advocate for your human rights.

See their website: <http://www.hpod.org/>

'Parenting Issues for Women with Disabilities in Australia' WWDA - May 2009

A new Policy Paper was recently published by Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA).

'The paper includes a number of key recommendations to the Australian Government: include the urgent need for a National Public Inquiry into the removal and/or threat of removal of babies and children from parents with intellectual disabilities; parents with mental health illnesses and parents with psychiatric disabilities. The need for the Australian Government to act immediately to investigate and address the barriers to reproductive autonomy and procreative choice for women with disabilities, is also a priority recommendation.'

The Paper is available for download from WWDA's website in either PDF or Word format. You can find it at:
www.wwda.org.au/subs2006.htm.

Important new research on targeted violence against people with disabilities from the UK

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Pages/disabilitytargetedviolence.aspx>

To mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, Topic paper, the Clearinghouse is issuing Topic paper #18: McFerran, L, (2009) 'The disappearing age: a discussion paper on a strategy to address violence against older women', which is now available to download from the Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse website at:





<http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Topic%20Paper%20Disappearing%20Age.pdf>

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Support your way: A self-directed approach for Victorians with a disability

The Department of Human Services, Disability Services have released new information on their move from more traditional service arrangements to a service system that provides flexibility, greater control and choice.

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving-supports/self-directed-support/whats-new-in-self-directed-support/support-your-way-a-self-directed-approach-for-victorians-with-a-disability>

'Love and Justice' – new choral anthem celebrating women

Kavisha Mazzella

Musical Director of Love and Justice Choir

Last year, the centenary year of Women's Suffrage in Victoria, the Victorian Women's Trust pondered how to make a lasting tribute to the courage of women past and present who live to make this a better world. Through our collaboration, it took the good part of a year to create.

From late October last year, hundreds of women and girls from all ages, walks of life and cultures came together at the Northcote Town hall to rehearse this anthem. Aided and abetted by the staff of Victorian Women's Trust and an army of volunteers, the event blossomed into an inspiring and unforgettable public performance at BMW Edge on 28 November 2008.

This wonderful performance by can be seen in a YouTube film that has already clocked up 6,800 views. This song has had national radio airplay and is being picked up in the repertoire of choirs around the country as well as overseas and the film has also been shown at several recent conferences including the Human Rights Conference in Melbourne on the 17th of March. The song was also sung recently in Parliament House.

CDs are available from the Victorian Women's trust for \$10. Alternatively you can go to the website www.vwt.org.au and access music, lyrics and YouTube performance.

If you know of an event which others might want to attend, or you know of something interesting, like a book or website that we might find interesting, please send details to Sarah Boyd at vwdn@vwdn.org.au.

The theme for the next edition of this Newsletter will be health. Please send in your contribution regarding your experience accessing health services.

Please also note our change of phone number to 9664 9317.

