



Women
With
Disabilities
Australia
(WWDA)

www.wwda.org.au

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) Update Report March/April 2008

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia. It is a not-for-profit organisation constituted and driven by women with disabilities. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australia and one of only a very small number internationally. WWDA is inclusive and does not discriminate against any disability. WWDA is unique, in that it operates as a national disability organisation; a national women's organisation; and a national human rights organisation (more information about WWDA can be found at the organisation's extensive website: www.wwda.org.au). Please find below a brief Update Report from WWDA for the months of March/April 2008. If you have any questions, or would like more information on anything in this report, please email Carolyn or Shirley at: wwda@wwda.org.au. Previous Update Reports are available on the WWDA website at: www.wwda.org.au/bulletin.htm

Contents:

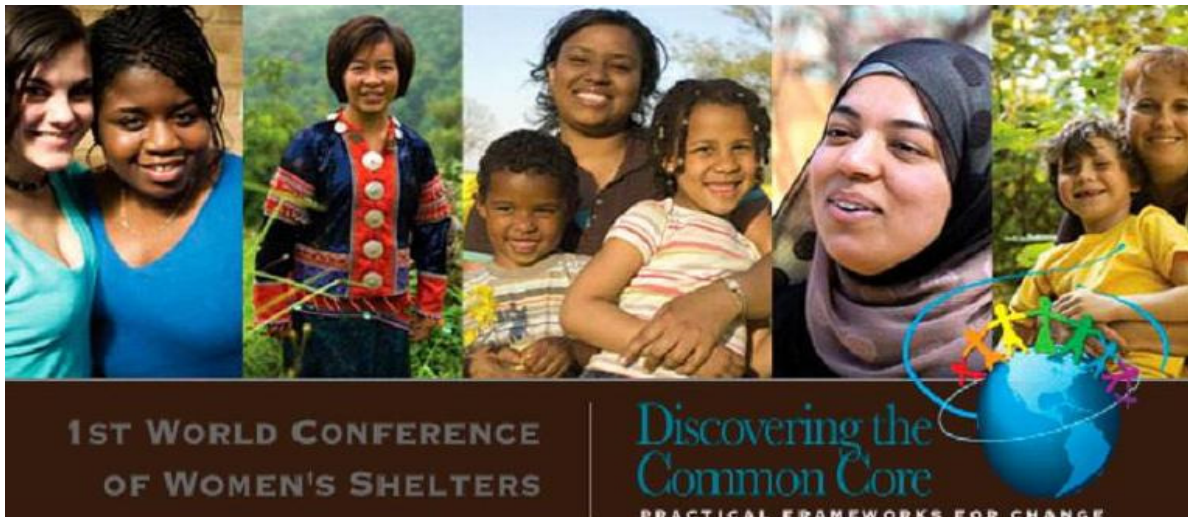
1. First World Conference of Women's Shelters
2. WWDA Policy & Position Paper on Advocacy & Human Rights
3. Sterilisation of Girls with Disabilities – Background & Update
4. Abuse of Roma Women's Reproductive Rights Through Forced Sterilisation
5. National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy
6. WWDA Meetings with Federal Ministers
7. Reports Available from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs
8. 4th International Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability
9. Government announces Disability Investment Group
10. Women understanding money: Free information sheets
11. Federal Labor's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children
12. We 'Cannot Wait' to End Violence Against Women – UN Secretary-General Launches Global Campaign
13. Victorian Women with Disabilities Network Advocacy Information Service (VWDN AIS) Clearinghouse
14. Queensland to Introduce Companion Card
15. On-the-spot Medicare claiming
16. Expanded Edition of CD - Improving Access to Buildings
17. Global Human Rights Education Network
18. New Publication from the Disability Press
19. New Book: Broken bodies — broken dreams: violence against women exposed
20. WWDA Endorses NGO Shadow Report to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
21. New on the WWDA Website
22. WWDA Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities
23. Join WWDA!



Women
With
Disabilities
Australia
(WWDA)

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
PO Box 605, Rosny Park, Tasmania 7018 AUSTRALIA
Ph: +61 3 62448288 Fax: +61 3 62448255
Email: wwda@wwda.org.au
Web: www.wwda.org.au

1. First World Conference of Women's Shelters



In March 2008, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) in conjunction with the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada, submitted a proposal to present a paper and workshop at the first ever World Conference on Shelters, to be held in Alberta, Canada, September 8 – 11, 2008. WWDA and DAWN's proposal '*Forgotten Sisters: Recognising and Responding to Domestic Violence in the Lives of Women with Disabilities*' was accepted by the Conference organisers, which is a wonderful achievement for both WWDA and DAWN.

WWDA and DAWN's proposal will address a range of issues, including for example, incidence, prevalence, barriers to services, key strategies to end and prevent violence against women with disabilities. Central to WWDA and DAWN's presentation is the need for meaningful engagement with women with disabilities so that their experiences and their views are integral to identifying potential solutions and building successful interventions.

WWDA is now in the process of working very hard to try and secure funding to enable a delegation of WWDA members to attend. Should we be successful in securing funds, we will then choose two [2] WWDA members via an Application process to attend the Conference as WWDA delegates.

For more information about the Conference:

Discovering the Common Core: Practical Frameworks for Change
September 8 – 11, 2008, Edmonton, Alberta CANADA
Web: www.womenshelter.ca/home_en.php

Or alternatively, contact WWDA at: wwda@wwda.org.au

2. WWDA Policy & Position Paper on Advocacy & Human Rights

As part of WWDA's funding contract requirements, the organisation is required to produce an annual Policy Paper for the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). WWDA has recently produced its 2008 major Policy & Position Paper entitled '*The Role of Advocacy in Advancing the Human Rights of Women with Disabilities in Australia*'. WWDA has previously argued that the way disability advocacy is funded and conceptualised in the Australian policy context has not kept pace with the international shift in perspective from an approach motivated by charity towards the disabled, to one based on rights.

WWDA's Policy paper looks at how human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) can and should be used to inform and guide disability advocacy work. WWDA argues that in translating these powerful human rights instruments into concrete change in the lives of women and girls with disabilities, Governments must establish and support mechanisms and structures which enable women with disabilities to 'do it for themselves', and to act politically as agents in their own right. The final section of the paper identifies a number of key human rights issues for women and girls with disabilities in Australia and links the issue with the

relevant core international human rights treaty. Each issue area is briefly discussed, and the key advocacy outcomes are detailed.

WWDA's Policy & Position Paper has been sent to a number of Ministers and politicians, and WWDA is also in the process of distributing a copy to all WWDA members. A copy will also soon be made available on WWDA's website. Please contact WWDA at wwda@wwda.org.au if you would like a copy emailed to you.

3. Sterilisation of Girls with Disabilities – Background & Update

In 2001, WWDA completed a national research study into sterilisation and reproductive health of women and girls with disabilities. The resulting report *'Moving Forward'* recommended the banning of all sterilisations of girls under the age of 18 years and the prohibition of sterilisation of adults in the absence of informed consent, except in circumstances where there is a serious threat to health or life. The report also outlined a program of reconciliation; co-ordinated legislative and policy development; information, support and service models; consent considerations; approaches to reproductive health care and education; and data collection [1]. The former Australian Government failed to substantially address and respond to any of the report's recommendations.

In August 2003, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) agreed that a nationally consistent approach to the authorisation procedures required for the lawful sterilisation of minors was appropriate, and began the process of developing draft legislation in this area [2]. In November 2006, the Standing Committee of Attorneys General (SCAG), released for consultation with selected stakeholders [3], its draft Bill (*Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Regulation of Sterilisation) Bill 2006*). The Bill set out the procedures that jurisdictions could adopt in authorising the sterilisation of children who have an intellectual disability [4].

WWDA did not support the development of a nationally consistent approach to the authorisation procedures required for the lawful sterilisation of children with an intellectual disability. WWDA is of the view that sterilisation is a question for adulthood not childhood. WWDA continued its decade long advocacy campaign urging all Australian Governments to work together to develop universal legislation which prohibits sterilisation of any child unless there is a serious threat to health or life [5]. WWDA's position has been recommended and endorsed by over 100 Australian non-government organisations through the 2008 Australia NGO Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [6].

At the SCAG meeting on 28 March 2008, it was agreed that *'there would be limited benefit in developing model legislation'* and the issue of sterilisation of Intellectually Disabled Minors was removed from the SCAG Agenda. Ministers also agreed to *'review current arrangements to ensure that all tribunals or bodies with the power to make orders concerning the sterilisation of minors with an intellectual disability are required to be satisfied that all appropriate alternatives to sterilisation have been fully explored and/or tried before such an order is made'* [7].

In mid April 2008, the Queensland Government announced its intention to ban cosmetic surgery for adolescents. In making the announcement, the Qld Premier stated: *'I appreciate this can be a difficult time, especially in a young woman's development, but to resort to a surgeon's blade is an adult response that is best left until one is an adult'* [8]. WWDA has publicly questioned the Queensland government's priorities, and has urged Premier Bligh and other State/Territory leaders to turn their attention to the more pressing human rights issue of banning the non- therapeutic sterilisation of minors [9].

Australian legislation still fails to prohibit forced sterilisation.

- [1] Dowse, L. & Frohmader, C. (2001) *Moving Forward: Sterilisation and Reproductive Health of Women and Girls with Disabilities*, A Report on the National Project conducted by Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), Canberra.
- [2] Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) Working Group (2004) *Non-Therapeutic Sterilisation of Minors with a Decision-Making Disability - Issues Paper*. Available at: www.wwda.org.au/scagpap1.htm
- [3] Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) Working Group (2006) *Issues Paper on the Sterilisation of Intellectually Disabled Minors*. Available at: www.wwda.org.au/scagpap2.htm
- [4] Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) Working Group (2006) *Draft 17: Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Regulation of Sterilisation) Bill 2006*. Available at: www.wwda.org.au/sterbill06.pdf
- [5] Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) (2007) *The Development of Legislation to Authorise Procedures for the Sterilisation of Children with Intellectual Disabilities: Policy and Position Paper*. WWDA, Hobart, Tasmania. Available at: www.wwda.org.au/polpapster07.htm

- [6] Balgi, T., Pettitt, A., Schokman, B., & Lynch, P. (2008) *'Freedom, Respect, Equality, Dignity: Action'*. NGO Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Australia. Prepared on behalf of the Kingsford Legal Centre; the National Association of Community Legal Centres, and the Human Rights Law Resource Centre. (See page 89).
- [7] Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) *Communique* 28 March 2008.
- [8] Premier Anna Bligh, Brisbane Times, April 17 2008.
- [9] WWDA email communication to members and key stakeholders April 18, 2008.

4. Abuse of Roma Women's Reproductive Rights Through Forced Sterilisation

World Roma Day is marked annually on April 8. Kathambi Kinoti of the Association for Women's Rights in Development, wrote this article to highlight the abuse of women's reproductive rights through forced sterilisation. Source: AWID Friday File, April 11 2008.

The Roma people have been subject to various forms of discrimination for centuries. This includes discrimination in access to education, housing, medical care and other services, and extends to violence and other human rights abuses. The racial discrimination against the Roma has also extended to state-sponsored attempts to control their reproductive capacities in order to contain or reduce their population.

Part of the Nazi regime's ethnic cleansing of the Roma people was their practice of forced sterilisation. In recent years, Romani women in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia have also been subjected to forced sterilisation. From the 1970s until 1990 the communist government of Czechoslovakia sterilised Romani women as part of an official policy to reduce their 'high, unhealthy' birth rate. [1] They implemented their policy through programmes that provided monetary incentives for women to undergo the operation, and condoned misinformation and coercion. Although it has been assumed that the practice ended in the 1990s, the European Roma Rights Centre says that there is evidence that coercive sterilizations continue to date. [2]

Cases have been documented of women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia having undergone sterilisation operations where neither oral nor written consent was obtained prior to the operation. In a number of cases consent was obtained under questionable circumstances such as when a woman was in advanced stages of labour or during delivery. Many women have been irresponsibly subjected to caesarean sections as a pretext for sterilisation. There are cases where consent has been given on the basis of incomplete and inadequate information about the consequences of sterilisation or alternative methods of contraception. Some women under the age of 18 have been sterilised without the required authorisation of their legal guardians. Many women have been unknowingly sterilised and have only found out about the operation years after it was carried out.

According to the Center for Reproductive Rights 'Slovak doctors are consistently derelict in their duty to provide Romani women with information about their reproductive health status and options. These doctors instead choose to make intimate health decisions for women without supplying them with the information they need and are entitled to as the primary decision makers over their bodies and future reproductive capacity.' [3]

A number of women have sued for compensation after their unlawful sterilisations. Last year, a Czech court ordered a hospital to pay a thirty year old Romani woman compensation and apologise for sterilising her against her will. The woman who had undergone the procedure ten years earlier only learnt about it after seven years. [4] Romani women often face challenges in accessing justice after undergoing forced sterilisation. In 2007 a Slovakia court awarded compensation to three Romani women who underwent involuntary sterilisations between 1999 and 2002. Their complaints to the local prosecutor's office had been ignored and the court ruled that this was a violation of their human rights. [5]

In 2004 the Czech Ombudsman's office conducted an investigation into the forced sterilisation of Romani women and recommended that the Czech government enact legislation to provide for compensation for women affected by the sterilisations. The government however rejected this recommendation. The Czech government has also come under criticism from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for failing to impede the performance of illegal sterilisations by doctors.

There are a number of human rights organisations carrying out research on and advocacy against forced sterilisations. However the governments of countries where they have been historically carried out have been slow in responding to the problem even where official sterilisation policies have ended. Women's movements need to step up their pressure to governments, the United Nations and the European Union to ensure that this persistent abuse of Romani women's human rights comes to an end.

Endnotes:

1. 'Challenging Coercive Sterilisations of Romani Women in the Czech Republic.' <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2228>
2. Ibid.
3. Center for Reproductive Health. 'Body and Soul: Forced Sterilization and other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia.' 2003
4. 'Historic Verdict: Court awards Compensation to a Romani Woman for Sterilization for the First Time.' Romano Vodi, October 12, 2007.
5. World News Editor 'Slovakia Court compensates Gypsy Women.' The Earth Times, February 5, 2007.

5. National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

In early April, the Minister for Employment Participation, Brendan O'Connor, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten, released a discussion paper for the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy. The discussion paper seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders about how to address the barriers faced by people with disability and/or mental illness in finding and retaining a job. Mr O'Connor and Mr Shorten also met with stakeholders in Melbourne for the first consultation session as part of the strategy. Mr O'Connor and Mr Shorten are holding consultations in every capital city around Australia, as well as a number of regional centres.

"There are many people with disability and mental illness who face employment barriers on a daily basis," Mr O'Connor said. "The Government has identified boosting employment as one of the five key measures for tackling inflation and people with a disability or mental illness have much to offer. "Yet despite 17 years of strong economic growth, Australia is ranked a disappointing 13 out of 19 OECD countries in employment rates for all people with a disability. "We want people to share their first hand knowledge with the Government so that the strategy can not only identify barriers but also address them in a practical and effective way."

Mr Shorten said the strategy would be developed in consultation with people with disability and/or mental illness, employers, employment service providers, peak bodies, state and territory governments and experts. *"The OECD results show Australia is lagging behind the rest of the world. If we are truly to be the lucky country, people with disability or a mental illness must have the opportunity to participate in it," Mr Shorten said. "The strategy aims to encourage more employers to employ people with a disability or mental illness by addressing myths about increased risks and costs, and increasing awareness of the benefits. As well as addressing barriers to participation in the workforce, the national strategy will also provide a comprehensive approach for Commonwealth, state and territory governments to work together more effectively," Mr Shorten said.*

Copies of the Discussion Paper are available from WWDA in either PDF format (311 KB) or Word (197 KB) or Rich Text Format (366 KB). Please email us if you would like a copy of the Discussion paper emailed to you.

The closing date for Submissions is June 30, 2008. The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) (www.afdo.org.au) is providing support for people who would like to contribute but are unable to provide a written submission. Please contact Kirra at AFDO for more information on Ph: 03 9662 3324 or TTY: 03 9662 3724. If people are calling from outside Melbourne, Kirra will call them back. More information on the strategy, including copies of the Discussion Paper is available at: www.deewr.gov.au/employmentstrategy.

6. WWDA Meetings with Federal Ministers

Following the Federal election late last year, WWDA wrote to a number of incoming Federal Ministers to introduce WWDA and request meetings in order to provide briefings on the issues facing women with disabilities. In March, WWDA President Annie Parkinson and Vice-President Sue Salthouse met with advisers of Tanya Pliberseck's (Minister for Status of Women, Minister for Housing) and also met with Senator Ursula Stephens (Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion & the Voluntary Sector). Issues raised with both included:

- Sterilisation of Minors;
- Violence Against Women with Disabilities;
- Mothers with Disabilities;
- Removal of Babies/Children from mothers with intellectual disability;
- Neglect of women with disabilities by Australia in its implementation of the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Housing Options;

- The need to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities & the CEDAW Optional Protocol.

In April, Annie & Sue also met with Mr Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services. A number of issues were discussed, including women with disabilities & the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA). The CSTDA is a five-year binding agreement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments outlining the roles and responsibilities in relation to disability services for each jurisdiction. The CSTDA is a key direction setting document and is comprised of a Multilateral and Bilateral Agreement (for more information on the CSTDA see WWDA's 2006 Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Funding and Operation of the CSTDA at: www.wwda.org.au/cstdasub06.htm).

WWDA has consistently argued that the CSTDA needs to make explicit recognition of the impact of multiple discriminations caused by the intersection of gender and disability, and include provision for specific, targeted measures to enable women with disabilities to exercise their rights. In this context, WWDA strongly recommended to Mr Shorten that the eight key priority areas identified by Labor at the election must incorporate gender considerations wherever possible. For example, given the pervasive nature and increased incidence of all forms of violence against women with disabilities, the CSTDA policy priorities, priority issues, and bilateral activity themes must address this urgent issue.

7. Reports Available from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs

WWDA has recently received several reports from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on violence against women, its causes and consequences; on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. A very brief summary of each is provided below. Please email WWDA at wwda@wwda.org.au if you would like a copy of any or all of these reports.

7.1. Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights in resolution 1994/45, adopted on 4 March 1994, decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur on violence against women, including its causes and consequences. The mandate was extended by the Commission on Human Rights in 2003, at its 59th session in resolution 2003/45. This document is the UN Special Rapporteur's (Yakin Ertürk) second thematic report to the Human Rights Council in her capacity as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council decision 1/102. Chapter II highlights her activities in 2007. Chapter III proposes indicators on violence against women and State response to such violence.

7.2. Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The Special Rapporteur (Manfred Nowak) on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment recently submitted this second report to the Human Rights Council. Chapter I summarizes the activities of the Special Rapporteur undertaken between August and December 2007, including updates on country visits, future visits and pending requests for invitations, and highlights of key presentations and meetings. In chapter II, the Special Rapporteur focuses on the protection of women from torture, including the need for a gender-sensitive interpretation of torture; torture and ill-treatment of women in the public sphere; torture and ill-treatment in the private sphere (violence within the family and community); women in the refoulement or refugee context; and justice for women-survivors of torture. In Chapter III he sets out his conclusions and recommendations.

7.3. Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living

This report constitutes a review of the work and activities of the first Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Miloon Kothari, since his appointment in 2000. The Special Rapporteur confirms his broad interpretation of the right to adequate housing based on the indivisibility and universality of human rights and in this context he underlines the utmost importance that the struggle against discrimination plays in the realization of the right to adequate housing. He recalls the tools elaborated during his term (including for eg: the questionnaire on women and adequate housing) and encourages relevant actors to employ them, as well as to further develop and adapt them to national and local situations. The Special Rapporteur strongly advocates a combination of a humanitarian and human rights approach to address the situation of millions of people living in grossly inadequate housing conditions and those facing homelessness and landlessness. To develop the mandate, he calls for stronger support and response from States and proposes the issues for further consideration, including

the recognition of the link between access to land and the human right to adequate housing; rural areas; natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies; climate change; and the role of civil society. He finally addresses and reiterates a set of recommendations elaborated during his term and presented in his reports, including on women's rights to housing, land, property and inheritance.

8. 4th International Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability



Mobility International USA (MIUSA) invites women with disabilities around the world to apply for the *4th International Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)* to be held in Eugene, Oregon, USA, from August 12 – September 2, 2008. The WILD program will include workshops, site visits and practical activities on priority issues for women with disabilities, including:

- Leadership for economic empowerment;
- Educational rights and opportunities;
- Career planning and higher education;
- Employment strategies;
- Health and family issues;
- Accessible transportation and communities;
- Using the media and coalition building;
- Organizational development and sustainability;
- Cultural, team-building and community service;
- Goals and action plans.

Program participants will be responsible for obtaining a current passport, U.S. visa and payment of a \$250 USD registration fee. MIUSA will purchase: roundtrip airplane tickets for participants to travel from home countries to Eugene, Oregon, USA. MIUSA will provide food, lodging, health insurance and accessible public transportation during all WILD program activities.

Contact WWDA: wwda@wwda.org.au for an Application Form or for more information

9. Government announces Disability Investment Group

The Australian Government has established a Disability Investment Group to explore innovative funding ideas from the private sector that will help people with disability and their families' access greater support and plan for the future. On announcing the initiative in late April, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten, said the group would encourage the private sector to play a greater role in the disability sector. *"The Disability Investment Group will look closely at identifying and developing options for private investment in housing, education, employment, equipment and other support for people with disability,"* Mr Shorten said. *"There is a real role the private sector can play here, and it is the Disability Investment Group's job to find out what barriers are stopping private investment, and what can be done to remove them."* The Disability Investment Group will also look at innovative financial incentives and products to help families invest in the long term care of loved ones with disability. Its members are:

- Ian Silk, Chief Executive, AustralianSuper (Chair);
- Bruce Bonyhady, President of Philanthropy Australia, ANZ Executors and Trustees and Chairman of Yooralla;
- Alan Fels, Professor, Dean of the Australian New Zealand School of Government, and former chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission;
- Bill Moss, Boston Management Services, former Banking and Property Head at Macquarie Bank;
- Mary Ann O'Loughlin, The Allen Consulting Group;
- Kathy Townsend, Kathleen Townsend Executive Solutions Pty Ltd;
- John Walsh, PriceWaterhouseCoopers

The Disability Investment Group will shortly invite submissions seeking advice on how to remove barriers to greater private investment in disability, and will also conduct a series of consultations around Australia.

10. Women understanding money: Free information sheets

Women understanding money is a joint initiative of the Australian Government's Financial Literacy Foundation and Office for Women, developed in consultation with Security4Women. It consists of 14 information sheets that discuss financial issues of personal interest to women at different stages of life, from starting out in their first job to getting ready for retirement. They include:

- Your relationship with money
- Starting out
- Managing on a low income
- Money and the single woman
- Managing money in your relationship
- Having a baby?
- Teaching your kids about money
- Your money is your business
- Managing money when your relationship ends
- Getting ready for retirement
- Managing money when your partner dies
- How to get good advice about money
- Get to know your super
- What does it all mean? Understanding the language of money

Also available is the *Foundation's Financial Literacy - Women Understanding Money* report. The report builds on the findings of *Financial Literacy - Australians Understanding Money* and examines women's self-reported abilities, attitudes and behaviour on a range of money management issues.

If you would like a copy of the Information Sheets or the Report, you can email WWDA on: wwda@wwda.org.au or alternatively, you can download them from the website: www.understandingmoney.gov.au

NB: WWDA has written to the Office for Women (OFW) and the Australian Government's Financial Literacy Foundation, to request Word, RTF, and/or HTML versions of the information sheets, as at this stage they have only been made available in PDF. WWDA has received confirmation from the Financial Literacy Foundation that the Information Sheets will be converted into RTF formats and will be available on the website shortly.

11. Federal Labor's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children

The key elements to Federal Labor's approach to addressing domestic violence include:

- educating young Australians, particularly boys about respect and awareness of the impact of domestic violence in the community;
- developing national measures to confront domestic violence head on;
- investing in crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Federal Labor's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children* will include:

- \$1 million to boost White Ribbon Day education activities in rural and regional communities;
- Respectful relationship resources for all Australian high schools;
- Tougher and nationally consistent laws and best practice;
- \$500,000 to boost the Australian Institute of Criminology's National Homicide Monitoring Program;
- \$200,000 for research into international best practice models for working with perpetrators of violence;
- \$150 million to construct 600 additional houses to accommodate people who are homeless including women and children escaping domestic violence.

Labor's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children, will be overseen by a **National Council on Violence Against Women and Children**. The National Council will include survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, law enforcement agencies, academics and peak service bodies including the Women's Services Network and the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence.

WWDA has written to the Minister for the Status of Women (Hon Tanya Plibersek) to stress the importance of WWDA having a place on this Council. In doing so, WWDA reiterated that, compared to non-disabled women, women with disabilities:

- experience violence at higher rates and more frequently;
- are at a significantly higher risk of violence;
- have considerably fewer pathways to safety;
- tend to be subjected to violence for significantly longer periods of time;
- experience violence that is more diverse in nature; and,
- experience violence at the hands of a greater number of perpetrators.

And yet, despite these facts, legislation, policy and services for women with disabilities experiencing, or at risk of experiencing violence, are limited at best and non-existent at worst. WWDA's work on the issue of violence against women with disabilities has also found that: inherent in the key strategies to address violence against women with disabilities is the need for meaningful engagement with women with disabilities so that their experiences and their views are integral to identifying potential solutions and building successful interventions.

WWDA understands that the membership of the National Council on Violence Against Women and Children will soon be announced by Minister Plibersek. WWDA will keep its members updated on any announcements.

12. We 'Cannot Wait' to End Violence Against Women – UN Secretary-General Launches Global Campaign



On 28 February 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (pictured left) kicked off a multi-year global campaign bringing together the United Nations, governments and civil society to try to end violence against women, calling it an issue that 'cannot wait.' *"At least one out of every three women is likely to be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Through the practice of prenatal sex selection, countless others are denied the right even to exist,"* Mr. Ban said in his address at the opening in New York of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Violence against women impedes economic and social growth, and thus the new campaign will run until 2015, the same target year as the internationally agreed aims known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Noting that weapons of armed conflict today include rape, sexual violence and abduction of children to be conscripted as soldiers or sex slaves, the Secretary-General recounted his visits to war-torn areas and his conversations with survivors of violence. *"This is a campaign for them. It is a campaign for the women and girls who have the right to live free of violence, today and in the future,"* he said. *"It is a campaign to stop the untold cost that violence against women inflicts on all humankind."*

Mr. Ban called on the cooperation of the world's youth, women's groups, men around the world, the private sector and Member States to help the new initiative succeed. He acknowledged that there is no 'blanket approach' to tackling the scourge, noting that each country must formulate its own measures to address violence against women. *"But there is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable,"* the Secretary-General stated, adding that he hopes to hold a high-level event in 2010 to review progress.

As part of the campaign launch, Rachel N. Mayanja, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, held a press conference together with a number of other activists, both male and female, working to end violence against women and are slated to participate in other discussions on the subject at UN Headquarters. *"While everybody professes that women hold up the sky and women's contributions are critical to development – to everything – it hasn't been demonstrated concretely."* Ms Mayanja said. *"And here we are, halfway through the Millennium Development Goals projected period, and we are still lagging behind."*

Many women have been left out of development efforts because of the violence that is continually being inflicted on them, she said. The Secretary-General's campaign, she added, would bring a new sense of urgency to bear on this tragic issue.

For more information go to: <http://endviolence.un.org>

13. Victorian Women with Disabilities Network Advocacy Information Service (VWDN AIS) Clearinghouse



The Clearinghouse (www.whv.org.au/vwdn/clearinghouse.htm) is a central component of the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network Advocacy Information Service (VWDN AIS), which has been established by the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network, in partnership with Women's Health Victoria. The VWDN AIS advocates on behalf of women with disabilities, and provides support and information to assist systemic advocacy work that addresses the needs of women with disabilities in Victoria.

The scope of the clearinghouse collection reflects the three current priority areas of VWDN AIS work:

Access to health services: The VWDN AIS works to improve the access that women with disabilities in Victoria have to health services. For information about VWDN AIS work in this priority area, go to: www.whv.org.au/vwdn/health.htm

Violence: The VWDN AIS works to address and prevent violence against women with disabilities in Victoria. For information about VWDN AIS work in this priority area, go to: www.whv.org.au/vwdn/violence.htm.

Parenting and reproductive rights: The VWDN AIS supports women with disabilities in their parenting roles and reproductive choices. For information about VWDN AIS work in this priority area, go to: www.whv.org.au/vwdn/parenting.htm.

The Clearinghouse contains information resources in a variety of forms, including: articles and papers, fact sheets, frameworks, legislative materials, reports, and submissions. The clearinghouse also includes organisations and directories. VWDN AIS welcomes your feedback on any aspect of the VWDN AIS clearinghouse. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send an email to: vwdn@vwdn.org.au. Please include the words 'clearinghouse feedback' in the subject line of your email.

The Clearinghouse can be accessed at: <http://www.whv.org.au/vwdn/clearinghouse.htm>

14. Queensland to Introduce Companion Card

In 2003, the Queensland Government introduced the *Queensland Government Carer Recognition Policy* to formally recognise the significant role of Queensland carers in the community. The Queensland Government *Carer Action Plan 2006-2010*, launched in December 2006, translates this policy into a series of actions to be implemented over the next four years. One of the key initiatives emerging from the *Carer Action Plan* is the introduction of two new cards, one of which is the Companion Card. The Queensland Government has committed \$6M over four years for Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Communities to develop and administer these cards. The Companion Card, referred to in the *Carer Action Plan* as an access card, will be issued to a person with a disability who has a lifelong need for attendant care support to be able to participate at most community venues or activities.

To be eligible for a Companion Card, a person will need to be able to show:

- they live in Queensland; and
- have a disability; and
- that due to the impact of their disability are unable to participate in most community venues or activities without attendant care support; and
- their need for this level of support will be life-long.

The introduction of the Companion Card is being led by Disability Services Queensland in partnership with the Department of Communities. It is anticipated that the Companion Card will become operational in the latter half of 2008. For more information contact:

Avril Alley, Project Manager, Disability Services Queensland

Ph: (07) 3836 0496

Email: axalley@disability.qld.gov.au

Web: www.disability.qld.gov.au/community/carers-recognition/companion-card.html

15. On-the-spot Medicare claiming

Many doctors are now offering on-the-spot Medicare claiming which means you can claim your rebate without having to leave the doctor's surgery. Depending on the system that your doctor's surgery uses, the practice can lodge your claim (at the same time you pay your bill) via a secure internet connection using the surgery's computer or through the EFTPOS terminal using your EFTPOS card. Your rebate will be paid into your cheque or savings account within two–three working days if your doctor uses the internet based system. If your doctor uses the EFTPOS based system which requires your EFTPOS card, your rebate will be paid almost immediately. If you are bulk billed nothing changes.

Next time you go to your doctor ask at the practice if they offer on-the-spot Medicare claiming. For more information:

Go to: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

Visit: Your local Medicare Office

Or phone 132 011 (Call charges apply, 24 hour service)

16. Expanded Edition of CD - Improving Access to Buildings



The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has produced a new expanded edition of its very popular CD *The good, the bad and the ugly* aimed at improving access to buildings for people with a disability. Over 4000 copies of the original CD have been distributed to architects, designers, builders, property owners, certifiers and community advocacy groups. *The good the bad and the ugly* in words and pictures looks at fourteen examples of mistakes made in applying the access provisions of today's Building Code of Australia and its referenced Australian Standards and looks at the reasons why those mistakes occur. It could be used as a self learning tool or as an in-house continuing education program.

For a free copy of this CD:

Email: publications@humanrights.gov.au

or download the material from the website at:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/buildings/good.htm

17. Global Human Rights Education Network



The Global Human Rights Education Network is an information and advocacy network that promotes learning and training in the field of human rights.

Membership is open to all organisations that support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are involved in education and training activities promoting the human rights framework. The Global HRE Network is a project of Human Rights Education Associates (HREA). The Global Human Rights Education Network was inspired by the vibrancy of the informal network of educators and trainers who participate in the Global Human Rights Education listserv as well as regional listservs of our partners, which connects over 10,000 individuals and organisations engaged in human rights education (HRE) worldwide. Support has been provided by UNESCO, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Reebok Human Rights Foundation.

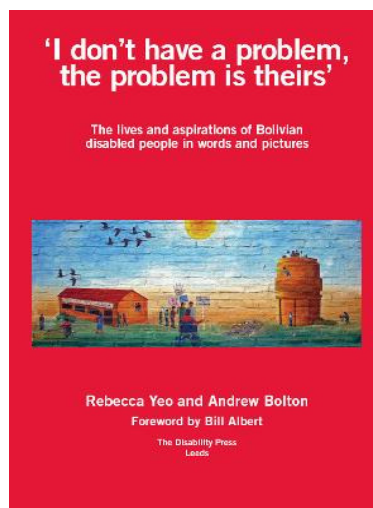
The objectives of the Global HRE Network are:

- To promote information sharing among membership
- To support the sharing of good practice in carrying out education and training activities
- To advocate for human rights education and training in all sectors, as called for in the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Members continue to have the benefits of information about training courses and on-line learning and training tools hosted on the HREA website. In addition, members receive annually an updated, electronic version of the Directory of the Global Human Rights Education Network.

For more information, go to: <http://www.hrea.org>

18. New Publication from the Disability Press



***"I don't have a problem, the problem is theirs"* - The priorities of Bolivian disabled people in words and pictures.** By Rebecca Yeo and Andrew Bolton

This research was carried out in Bolivia in 2006. It includes the voices of disabled men, women and children living in a range of economic and social circumstances. These were not leaders or the conventionally articulate, but ordinary disabled people talking about their lives, their aspirations and what they would like to change and how. They also expressed their ideas in drawings that were combined into mural designs. Groups worked together to paint murals in prominent places to draw attention to their situation. Inauguration events were held at which local authorities, NGOs, media and the public came to listen to participants explain the messages of the murals. This report is also available on request at no additional cost on CD, in PDF format, for ease of access for people who require alternative formats and is only available from the: Centre for Disability Studies, University of Leeds (UK). Order Form is available at:

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/books/book9.htm>

Cost: £10.00 including postage and packing (20% discount for orders of four or more)

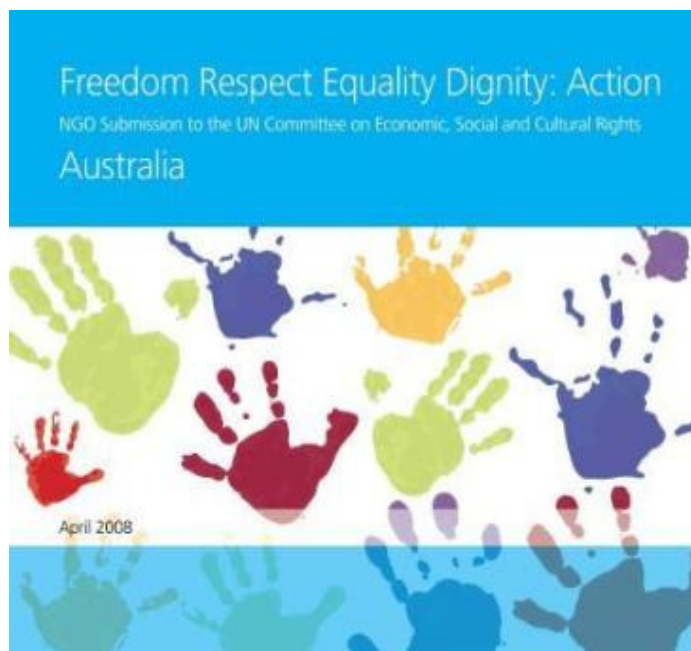
19. New Book: Broken bodies — broken dreams: violence against women exposed



Broken bodies — broken dreams: violence against women exposed offers a powerful testimony of the different types of gender-based violence experienced by women and girls worldwide throughout their lives, through the use of photographs, individual case studies and illustrative text. The publication is part of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) / Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) ongoing campaign to highlight the issues of violence against women through film, text and photography. Violence against women is a pandemic, one that transcends the bounds of geography, race, culture, class and religion. It touches virtually every community, in virtually every corner of the globe. Too often sanctified by custom and reinforced by institutions, it thrives on widespread impunity for perpetrators in what remains a patriarchal world that is reluctant to grant women equal rights and protection from gender-based violence.

Broken Bodies Broken Dreams comes with a training CD included which includes a summary presentation of each of the 15 chapters of the book. It is available on Amazon books and can also be directly purchased through Earthprint at www.earthprint.com

20. WWDA Endorses NGO Shadow Report to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights



In April 2008, a major NGO Report was submitted to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights regarding Australia's implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. WWDA contributed to the development of this report, specifically around the issues of sterilization of minors with disability.

The Report, entitled *Freedom, Respect, Equality, Dignity: Action* was jointly prepared by the Human Rights Law Resource Centre, the National Association of Community Legal Centres and Kingsford Legal Centre. A further 30 NGOs with specific human rights and subject matter expertise made substantial contributions to the Report. The Report is supported, in whole or in part, by over 100 NGOs.

The Report is intended to assist the Committee to prepare a List of Issues for Australia during the Pre-Sessional Working Group meeting from 19 to 23 May 2008. It is also intended to ensure that the Committee is equipped to engage in a rigorous and constructive dialogue with Australia when it is reviewed by the Committee in 2009.

The Report is a comprehensive and constructive analysis of the state of ESC rights in Australia and makes a range of targeted recommendations to address disadvantage and poverty. The Report documents a number of areas in which Australia is falling short of its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It focuses on areas that have been the subject of extensive NGO activity and research in Australia. Subjects detailed in the report include:

- the lack of legal recognition and protection of economic, social and cultural rights;
- the nature and extent of poverty in Australia and the need for a comprehensive national poverty reduction strategy;
- Indigenous self-determination and disadvantage;
- the current housing crisis and the significant problem of homelessness;
- groups within society that remain vulnerable to discrimination, such as Indigenous peoples, women and children, people with disability, asylum seekers and gay and lesbian couples;
- violence against women;
- the inadequacy of income and social security supports;
- the regression of workers' rights under Work Choices;
- the crisis in mental health in Australia and the inadequacy of mental health care;
- the chronic under funding of both public health care and education; and
- the deleterious impacts of Australia's immigration law and policy on families and children.

The Report includes recommendations as to concrete steps that Australian authorities should take to bring Australia more fully into compliance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; an Australia in which all persons can live with freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

The Report is available at www.hrlrc.org.au under Policy Work>International Submissions> FREDA: NGO Report to UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (April 2008).

Alternatively, WWDA can email you a copy, however, it is only available in PDF and is 3 MB in size.

21. New on the WWDA Website

Women With Disabilities Australia: 'Development of a Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities Project' Final Report (October 2007)

In April 2006, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) received funding from the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) Office for Women (OFW), under the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Funding Program, to develop a '*Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities*'. The Project commenced on April 1, 2006. This Report is the Final Report on the Project to the Office for Women (OFW). This Report details the process and achievements of the Project and is constructed in line with WWDA's Project Plan. Available in PDF and Word format. Go to: <http://www.wwda.org.au/confpaps.htm>

Motherhood and genetic screening: a personal perspective - By Fiona Place (2007)

This article was first published online in 2007 by the Down Syndrome Educational Trust. The author who lives in Australia, has kindly agreed for the article to be reproduced on the WWDA website. It has been made available in HTML and PDF versions. Go to: www.wwda.org.au/fplace1.htm

My CVA – Stroke: By Tanya Pascale

This is Tanya's personal account of her experience of stroke – a harrowing yet honest and inspiring story. Tanya's daughter Elise, also provides her perspective on the experience. Go to: www.wwda.org.au/pascale1.htm

22. WWDA Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities

In late November 2007, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) published a **Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities**. This Manual is made up of four Books:

- ***A Life Like Mine! - Narratives from women with disabilities who experience violence***
- ***Forgotten Sisters - A global review of violence against women with disabilities***
- ***It's Not Ok It's Violence - Information about domestic violence and women with disabilities***
- ***More Than Just A Ramp - A guide for women's refuges to develop disability discrimination act action plans***

Audio, e-text & Large Print PDF versions of the Booklets are included on a CD-ROM which accompanies the Manual. Braille and DAISY versions are also available on request. Cost: \$22.00 (within Australia). Overseas orders: price range between \$50.00 AUD - \$70.00 AUD depending on postal Zone. Order Forms and information about the Manual are available on the WWDA website: www.wwda.org.au/vrm2007.htm.

23. Join WWDA!

The success of Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) relies heavily on the participation and goodwill of our members. We are always seeking women with disabilities who would like to represent WWDA at government consultations, workshops, forums and committees, as well as helping us in other ways such as commenting on WWDA documents and reports; presenting papers at Conferences; writing articles for our website, becoming members of our Management Committee and so on. WWDA is a Public Benevolent Institution, which means that donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Remember, becoming a financial member of WWDA entitles you to nominate for the Management Committee when vacancies arise and/or vote at annual elections.

WWDA's Membership Form is available from the WWDA website (<http://www.wwda.org.au/member.htm>) or by contacting WWDA.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
PO Box 605, Rosny Park, Tasmania 7018 AUSTRALIA
Ph: +61 3 62448288 Fax: +61 3 62448255
Email: wwda@wwda.org.au
Web: www.wwda.org.au