



Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) Update Report February & March 2006

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 February & March 2006. If you have any questions, or would like more information on anything in this report, please email Carolyn or Angela at: wwda@ozemail.com.au.

Contents:

1. New WWDA Projects
 2. Draft UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities - Update
 3. CEDAW Shadow Report & CEDAW Meeting New York
 4. Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) Review - Update
 5. Interview with Circle of Women with Disabilities (CIMUDIS) in the Dominican Republic
 6. Article - Disability Issues are Feminist Issues
 7. Review of the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) - Update
 8. Women With Disabilities Western Australia (WA)
 9. Report of National Inquiry into Disability and Employment Tabled
 10. Welfare to Work - Overview of Changes for People with Disability
 11. Resources
-

1. New WWDA Projects

1.1. Advancement through Advocacy for Women With Disabilities

Early in 2005, WWDA submitted an Application for funding to the Commonwealth Office for the Status of Women (now known as the Office for Women). WWDA's Application sought funding to conduct a Project entitled 'Advancement through Advocacy for Women With Disabilities'. In early 2006, WWDA was notified that our Application had been successful, and that we will receive \$25,000 over 12 months to conduct the Project.

The overall aim and long term goal of the project is to improve the status of women with disabilities through systemic advocacy. The major objective of the Project is: 'to enhance WWDA's capacity to promote the participation of women with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.' Specifically, the Project will:

- Develop systems and processes whereby women with disabilities can be identified, trained and recruited to act as advocates to improve the status of women with disabilities;
- Develop the necessary tools to support women with disabilities in their representative and advocacy roles;
- Research and identify representation, leadership and systemic advocacy opportunities for women with disabilities.

WWDA has recently completed the Project Plan for the Project, which sets out in detail the key tasks, outcomes and measures of performance. The Project Plan has been accepted by the Office for Women and WWDA has just received the first grant installment. A Project Reference Group is currently being established.

If you would like a copy of the Project Plan emailed or posted to you, please contact the WWDA Office at: wwda@ozemail.com.au or phone: 03 62448288.

More information about the Project can be obtained by contacting:

Sue Salthouse (Project Co-ordinator)

Ph/Fax: (02) 6291 6842

Email: sudata@optusnet.com.au

1.2. Development and Production of a Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities Project

In late 2005, the Australian Government (through the Department of Family & Community Services) announced the availability of funding for Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault initiatives. In the 2005-06 Budget the Australian Government allocated \$75.7 million over four years to the Office for Women (Department of Family & Community Services) under the Women's Safety Agenda. The purpose of Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault funding is to address the impact of domestic and family violence and sexual assault through: community-based research; related partnership projects; and/or product development. WWDA submitted a proposal to the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault funding program in late December 2005, and in early March 2006, was notified that our Application had been successful.

Through its diverse and broad membership, WWDA identified an urgent need to undertake this Project, which focuses on the development and production of a Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities. This Manual will be developed in alternative formats in order to ensure accessibility for women with disabilities, and will be developed in consultation with the members of WWDA and other key stakeholders. There is a dearth of information and educational resources about domestic violence which are accessible to women with disabilities. This proposal has been developed in response to the expressed needs of women with disabilities in Australia, and the lack of information that is available to this group. The Project will be national in scope and has international applicability. The proposed Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities will be developed to serve a wide range of users.

The overall aim and long term goal of the project is to prevent and reduce violence against women with disabilities. The major objectives of the Project are to:

- improve access to information about violence for women with disabilities by developing and promoting accessible information resources;
- educate women with disabilities about violence and its prevention.

WWDA is currently developing a Project Plan which will provide detailed information on the key strategies/tasks; how the key strategies will be achieved; timeframe; and so on. If you would like a copy of the Project Plan emailed or posted to you, please contact the WWDA Office at: wwda@ozemail.com.au or phone: 03 62448288.

WWDA will be consulting regularly with its members on this Project, including providing information on how members can actively contribute information to the Project.

More information about the Project can be obtained by contacting:

Carolyn Frohmader (Project Manager)

Ph: (03) 62448288 Fax: (03) 62448255

Email: wwda@ozemail.com.au

2. Draft UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities - Update

In November 2001, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly established an Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) to "consider proposals for a comprehensive and integral convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities." The AHC has met a number of times since then, and met most recently in January 2006 to focus specifically on the current draft of the convention developed by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Don McKay in October 2005 (this draft is known as the 'Chair's Text'). One of the areas of debate within the Draft Text has been the issue of whether or not a UN Convention on People with Disabilities, should include a separate (Interpretive) Article on Women With Disabilities. WWDA has always argued that there must be an Interpretive Article on Women with Disabilities in the Convention (WWDA's most recent Submission on this issue can be found on WWDA's website at: <http://www.wwda.org.au/unconvsub3.htm>).

WWDA was most heartened by the Australian Government's recent position at the Ad Hoc Meeting in January 2006, on the matter of an Interpretive Article on Women with Disabilities. The Australian Government adopted the proposed article written by WWDA in our various Submissions on the Convention, and put this forward to the UN at the Ad Hoc Committee meeting in New York in January 06. This represented a significant shift for the Australian Government, which previously did not support a separate (interpretive) article on women with disabilities.

The Australian Government delegation proposed the following at the Ad Hoc Committee meeting in New York in January 06:

Australian proposed Article No. 6 - Women With Disabilities

State Parties recognise that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and that focused, gender-specific measures (including protective measures) will be necessary to ensure that women and girls enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men and boys.

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the equal right of women with disabilities to the enjoyment of all rights set out in this Convention.

Australian Intervention on Article 6

Australia has proposed a separate Article which is substantially reflected in the Facilitator's text.

We believe that it is important to recognize that the multiple discrimination experienced by women and girls is based on the intersection of gender and disability.

We are flexible on the proposal for the preamble (n) bis and the twin track approach proposed. However we strongly support both the inclusion of a separate article on women and the facilitator's text for this Article.

More information about the Australian Governments position on the various Articles within the proposed Convention, can be found at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc7australia.htm>

3. CEDAW Shadow Report & CEDAW Meeting New York

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. CEDAW was ratified by Australia in 1983. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also

committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

The Office for Women (Commonwealth Department of Family & Community Services) has responsibility for monitoring Australia's obligations under CEDAW, including preparation of Australia's report under the Convention (required every four years) and providing advice on new developments relating to CEDAW. Progress with implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women primarily through considering the reports of state parties.

In December 2005, WWDA endorsed the Australian NGO Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (October 2005) prepared by the Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA). This Report was presented at the 34th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 16 January to 3 February 2006. The Australian Government delegation to the Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women attended the Session to address the Australian Government's Report '*Women in Australia*' (the combined Fourth and Fifth Reports on Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW Committee's assessment of the Australian Government's progress is contained in the document '*Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Australia*'. This document contains a number of 'concerns' of the CEDAW Committee as well as recommendations. There are a couple of specific references to women with disabilities in the Concluding Comments documents, although many of the recommendations of the Committee are relevant to disabled women. The specific 'concerns' and recommendations are:

'.....The Committee regrets the absence of sufficient information and data on women with disabilities. The Committee requests the State part to include adequate statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and disability, in its next report so as to provide a full picture of the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. It also recommends that the State Party regularly conduct impact assessments of its legislative reforms, policies and programmes to ensure that measures taken lead to the desired goals and that it inform the Committee about the results of these assessments in its next report.'

'.....The Committee is further concerned that the health needs of disabled women are inadequately met due to the lack of special equipment and other infrastructure.....The Committee recommends that the State Party develop the necessary infrastructure to ensure that disabled women have access to all health services.'

WWDA will be following up with the Australian Government to ascertain how it intends to address these areas of concern. Naturally, as the peak body for women with disabilities, WWDA is eager to work cooperatively with the Australian Government to ensure that the areas of concern identified by the CEDAW Committee are addressed as a priority. WWDA will keep members updated on our progress in this area.

If anyone would like a copy of the CEDAW Committee's assessment of the Australian Government's progress in the document '*Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Australia*', please contact the WWDA Office at: wwda@ozemail.com.au or phone: 03 62448288.

4. Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) Review - Update

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) was introduced in 1994 to provide Australian Government Departments and agencies with a planning framework to ensure access to all federal programs, services and functions for people with a disability. The original strategy applied to the activities of all departments, agencies and authorities for ten years (1994-2004) and aimed to 'enhance access opportunities for people with a disability to the programs, services and infrastructure of society'. The CDS was reviewed in 1995, 1997, and 1999. In 2004, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) contracted the Social Policy Research Centre to *design an evaluation* of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS). A Discussion Paper was released in July 2004. WWDA prepared a Submission in response

to the Discussion Paper (a copy is available on the WWDA website at www.wwda.org.au). In May 2005, the then Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) appointed a Consultancy firm (Erebus International) to undertake the next stage of the Review of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. WWDA prepared a Submission to this Review in early September 2005. We were advised at that time, that the Final Report of the CDS Review would be available in November 2005.

Over past months, WWDA has received a number of requests from members seeking information about the Final Report of the CDS Review. WWDA has written to the Department of FaCS requesting a copy of the Final Report and/or information on when the Report will be made available. The only information we have been given by FaCS at this stage, is that *'the Final Report of the CDS Review is not yet finalised'*.

WWDA will continue to seek a copy of the Final Report and will notify members immediately of its availability.

5. Interview with Circle of Women with Disabilities (CIMUDIS) in the Dominican Republic

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) kindly provided this transcript (By Rochelle Jones) of the recent interview they conducted with Cristina Francisco from Circle of Women with Disabilities (CIMUDIS) in the Dominican Republic about the intersection of feminism, discrimination and disability.

AWID: Circle of Women with Disabilities (CIMUDIS) is an organization in The Dominican Republic that is focused on the participation and leadership of women with motor, auditory and visual disabilities. Can you tell us some more about CIMUDIS and the women involved?

CF: CIMUDIS was founded in March 1998, and is the only organization in the Dominican Republic where all disabilities are integrated (for example, paraplegics, blind and deaf). We also have members in four regional areas in our country (14 regional groups), where the poverty and discrimination are stronger than in the metropolitan areas. There are more than 450 members. The focus of our work is the education and sensitisation of communities, in order to change negative perceptions about women with disabilities.

AWID: What barriers do women with disabilities face in the Dominican Republic, and how are women overcoming these barriers on a daily basis?

CF: The principal barriers we have to face every day are structural and mental. This is a big obstacle for women to study, and to obtain remunerative work. Another daily barrier is transportation, because in the Dominican Republic, there are no vehicles adapted for people with disabilities. Some old cultures and misperceptions about women with disabilities are the other major barriers facing us in our communities. These include the perception that we can't have a family, don't have any sexuality, and that we don't have feelings - we only exist to be inside the home, caring for children, cooking etc). In CIMUDIS we know that to face these challenges, is necessary to be proactive. For this reason we conduct many seminars and courses of leadership throughout the year.

AWID: Do you think that women with disabilities have generally been marginalised within larger feminist movements?

CF: Yes, that's true. For many years we have been looking for the recognition of other women's groups.

AWID: To what extent has this marginalisation taken place, and how has this affected the achievement of rights for women with disabilities?

CF: This situation is because the larger feminist movements really don't know this sector. There is a common misperception about women with disabilities as being sick, not as a group finding their rights. For this reason, we are often overlooked and not integrated into feminist agendas. In saying this, however, in every space, such as activities, or seminars about gender or similar, when feminists are together and present, we are all getting closer. In the last two years, for example, we have had meetings and activities with some

groups. Recently we had a very important encounter with different women's groups, and this event was made possible with the support of the International Institute for Studies and Research of Women -INSTRAW- in the Dominican Republic.

AWID: CIMUDIS was recently awarded one of the Innovation Seed Grants from AWID, for a 'Regional Meeting of Women with Disabilities to Strengthen, Leadership, Alliances and their Participation in Latin America'. What do you hope to achieve at this meeting?

CF: We hope to meet with other women leaders with disabilities from Latin America, such as Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, Cuba and others. At this meeting we hope to share the experiences of the AWID Forum and to motivate each other for the creation of women's organisations in each country. We want to strengthen the participation of women in this sector with the ultimate objective being to create a network of women with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

AWID: What can international feminist and women's movements learn from women with disabilities?

CF: They have to know that is not possible to speak about empowerment and progress for women when other groups, such as women with disabilities, are suffering discrimination and violation of their rights, and don't have the same opportunities to participate. With more barriers and discrimination, we are most vulnerable to poverty. What can international feminists and women's movements learn from women with disabilities? We can't walk, see or hear, but with our courage, together, we will create a space for all in society. Our voices for our rights will be stronger!!!



Women with disabilities attending the '1st Regional Meeting of Women with Disabilities to Strengthen Leadership, Alliances and their Participation in Latin America' (photo courtesy of AWID, 2006)

6. Article - Disability Issues are Feminist Issues

This article, by Rochelle Jones, has been reproduced here courtesy of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). Source: AWID Resource Net Friday File, Issue 268, Friday March 31, 2006.

Feminists have helped reveal the complex interactions between gender, race, sexuality and class and how they cut across and influence poverty, development and rights. But what about disability?

"Disability issues, like feminist issues, stem from common roots of prejudice, discrimination and oppression, where the personal becomes political, and.....the borders and divisions start to blur around the shape of a complex identity" [1]

According to Human Rights Watch [2], women constitute 75 percent of the disabled population in low and middle-income countries due to gender discrimination in the allocation of resources and access to services.

This data sheds different light on the feminisation of poverty and how gender and disability represent women in different ways.

Representation structures reality...

Maria Barile argues that the exclusion of women with disabilities occurs at different levels, and that the more layers of difference a person has from those who determine the norms, the further that person is positioned from power [3]. Being a poor, black woman with a disability, for example, means that she is positioned at a level that is the furthest away from the rich, white, non-disabled man – the group that currently determine and maintain the hegemonic structures (and margins) of power and privilege. Within the disability sector itself, however, there are also differing levels of discrimination depending on where you live and whether you are a man or a woman. For example, women with disabilities are twice as unlikely to be in paid employment as men with disabilities [4]. But the most salient point is that women with disabilities suffer discrimination by non-disabled women as well. Just as women's needs have traditionally been usurped by other "more important" areas of social, political and economic instability, women with disabilities have simply been misrepresented and overlooked.

Women with disabilities face the same types of human rights abuses that non-disabled women face, but social isolation, stigmatisation and dependence amplifies these abuses and their results. Women who suffer from domestic violence and abuse in their homes are already in a dangerous situation unless they can access support networks. Women with disabilities, however, face high levels of violence and abuse, as well as issues of mobility, and a dearth of support services that actually cater for disabilities. Where disadvantage seems to escalate with disability and gender, access to help and assistance decreases. This occurs in the North as well as the South.

The disability rights movements have been active for decades to advocate for policies and laws which protect the rights of people with disabilities, and since 2001 there has been considerable movement towards an international treaty on disability rights [5], with a draft Convention near completion as of February 2006 [6]. Thanks to vibrant disability rights movements in many different countries, disability itself has moved away from the realms of medicine, social work and rehabilitation to that of identity politics and human rights.

For women, however, it is the same struggle for visibility amongst structures that have been determined and governed by men. Women with disabilities, who face unique human rights abuses and to a greater level than men, in many cases remain marginalised and excluded in holistic approaches to disability that treat every person as 'equal' regardless of their gender, race, sexuality, class etc. Like the journeys that have taken place within women's rights movements across the world, it is the centres of power and wealth that have tended to dominate disability studies and the disability rights landscape, and as a result the most marginalised people – the poor, women, people of colour – have had their voices thwarted.

Reimagining women – Disability and feminism

The commonalities between women's rights and disability rights struggles are difficult to ignore. As Garland-Thomson notes: *"the pronouncements in disability studies of what we need to start addressing are precisely issues that feminist theory has been grappling with for years"* [7]. It is not just the fact that feminist analyses of gender, race and class can provide insight and inform analyses of disability and vice versa, but more importantly because women with disabilities are an integral part of women's rights movements and face the same struggles and the same structures that marginalise and exclude, but at deeper and more profound levels – both outside and inside women's rights movements.

In this context, feminist and women's rights movements and organizations have an obligation to integrate disability rights into their agendas, because like sexism and racism, disability is structured by social oppression and discrimination. In addition, there is a critical need to recognise that focusing on disability as a minority issue within women's rights is disempowering to disabled women. The discourse within the disability rights movements is positive and empowering, just like the discourse within the women's rights movements that treats women as agents of change rather than passive victims. Disabled women are too quickly labelled 'dependent' because they need assistance with the every day tasks of living, but as one disabled feminist has written: *"Independence is not about doing everything for yourself but about having control over how help is provided"* [8].

As we move forward in our journeys of reimagining women and women's rights agendas, we realise that this statement can apply to every context. Cristina Francisco aptly explained in the above interview how global feminist movements *"have to know that is not possible to speak about empowerment and progress for women when other groups, such as women with disabilities, are suffering discrimination and violation of their rights, and don't have the same opportunities to participate."* Once disabled women have control over how their voices are integrated into wider feminist movements, then they will not only be participating in feminist agendas, they will be setting the agendas that are most relevant to them.

NB: References are available from WWDA on request.

7. Review of the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) - Update

The National Disability Advocacy Program funds 73 advocacy organisations around Australia to help people with disabilities, their families and carers to get involved in community life as fairly and as fully as possible. A review of the National Disability Advocacy Program was completed in May 1999. The review was undertaken to ensure that Australian Government resources committed to disability advocacy services were being targeted in the most effective manner, and in line with government policies. A copy of the 1999 Review Report is available from the Department of Families & Communities website.

Go to: <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/representation-ndap.htm>

In early January 2006, the Australian Government announced another Review of the National Disability Advocacy Program. Social Options Australia (SOA) was appointed by the Commonwealth Department of Families and Communities to undertake an independent evaluation of the National Disability Advocacy Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the current way in which the Program operates against its stated goal and objectives. The areas to be evaluated are the extent to which the individual organisations funded through the NDAP provide their services effectively; use of measures and indicators to assess and maintain performance standards; and the funding system.

WWDA contributed to the Review and in February, participated in a Key Stakeholder interview with the Consultants.

WWDA recently contacted the Consultants (Social Options Australia) to obtain information on the status of the Review. The Consultants have just submitted a Progress Report to the Department of FaCS, and the Final Report of the Review is due by the end of April 2006. It is not clear at this stage, whether the Final Report will be publicly available. WWDA will continue to keep members informed of progress.

More information about the National Disability Advocacy Program Review can be obtained by contacting:

Carol Bradley
Social Options Australia
Ph: (08) 83268033
Email: carol@soa.com.au

8. Women With Disabilities Western Australia (WA)

Who are we?

We are a non-profit group that is run BY women with disabilities FOR women with disabilities. We are currently auspiced by the Ethnic Disability Centre who provide the co-ordinator with office space and administration support. Women With Disabilities WA is planning on incorporating in the near future.

What do we do?

We have monthly forums on a wide range of topics of interest to women with disabilities in Perth. The forums are held on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of every month at the Niche, 11 Abedare Road in Nedlands (Next to Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital) from 1-4 pm.

What sort of topics?

So far the forums have covered a range of interesting subjects including: women's health and sexuality, chocolate making, protective behaviours, boccia and healthy eating. Future forums planned include:

menopause, laughter yoga, volunteering, independent living, keeping fit with a disability, and much, much more. We have run a six week course on Self Defence for Women With Disabilities and are hoping to get funding to run a similar course once a year. We are planning for more exciting events and activities in the future.

Who can be involved?

Women with any kind of disability – for example, physical, intellectual, sensory and mental health disabilities. We also need able-bodied women as volunteers to help out at the forums. We are a fun, friendly group of women from a variety of backgrounds, and always welcome new members. Come along!

How do I find out more?

Contact the Co-ordinator, Rayna Lamb.



Women With Disabilities WA
C/o EDAC
320 Rokeby Road
SUBIACO WA 6008
Ph: 08 9388 7455 or 08 9380 9656
Email: womenwdwa@yahoo.com.au

9. Report of National Inquiry into Disability and Employment Tabled

A national report has called on the Australian Government to lead the development of a National Disability Employment Strategy for Australia to help get more people with disability into work. *Workability II: Solutions, the Report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's National Inquiry into Employment and Disability*, was tabled in Federal Parliament in mid February.

The National Inquiry was launched on 4 March 2005 to address the low employment rate and earning potential for people with a disability. People with disability represent a significant proportion of Australia's working age population (16.6%), yet they participate in the workforce at lower rates, they are less likely to be employed when they do attempt to participate, and they will earn less if they do get a job. This has been the case for a long time and indications are that it is getting worse.

The Inquiry found that governments needed to do more to provide support, services and incentives to employers and to people with disability to ensure true equality of opportunity. The Commonwealth Government has already agreed to establish a one-stop shop to provide a central information point for people with disability and employers, the first of 30 recommendations in the report. Governments also needed to provide leadership to the private sector, and the community at large, by improving public sector employment practices and developing clear information strategies to address employer concerns about the costs and risks associated with people with disability as employees. Business peak organisations and individual corporations also needed to play their parts in lowering the barriers to employing people with disability.

The report recommends the National Strategy address at least the following, as a matter of priority:

- developing a whole-of-government approach to ensuring appropriate financial and practical support to people with disability, including a streamlined system to provide adequate:
 - income support;
 - transport, equipment and health care subsidies and concessions;
 - workplace supports and modifications; and
 - personal care in the home and workplace;
- improving the effectiveness of government-funded employment service delivery to people with disability and employers (including recruitment assistance and access to supports on an as-needed basis);

- improving transition-to-work schemes for people with disability in secondary, tertiary and vocational education and training institutions;
- ensuring better relationships between private sector employers and government-funded information, recruitment and employment support services;
- increasing recruitment and retention of people with disability in the public sector (at the Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government levels); and
- developing a benchmarking, monitoring and reporting system to ensure accountability and ongoing improvement to the incentives, supports and services available to people with disability and employers.

The Report from the inquiry *Workability II: Solutions, the Report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's National Inquiry into Employment and Disability* is available at: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/employment_inquiry/index.htm

10. Welfare to Work - Overview of Changes for People with Disability

The Australian Government believes long term dependence on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) is 'not the best option for people who have the ability to work independently of support'. The Australian Government's 'Welfare to Work' package, announced in the 2005/06 Federal Budget, will see a number of changes for people with disabilities. The Australian Government has made available a 'Fact Sheet' on the 'Welfare to Work' package as it affects people with disabilities. The Fact Sheet has been reproduced here for the benefit of WWDA members, particularly those without access to electronic mail.

'Welfare to Work' for People with Disability

The changes to DSP eligibility will take effect on 1 July 2006. People claiming DSP from this date will not be eligible for the payment if they can work 15 hours or more per week independently of support. These people will be assessed for alternate income support payments, generally Newstart Allowance. People who were receiving DSP on 10 May 2005 will not be affected by the changes to DSP.

People who claim DSP between 11 May 2005 and 30 June 2006 will be assessed against the current eligibility criteria, including the 30 hours per week work capacity test. However, after 1 July 2006, their entitlement will be reassessed against the new eligibility criteria, including the 15 hours per week work capacity test, in normal periodic reviews, generally two years after DSP is granted.

Enhanced Income Support

To support the changes to DSP eligibility, Newstart and Youth Allowance will be enhanced. The income test for the payments will be changed so that all Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients can keep more of their payments as their income from work increases. Recipients with disability able to work part time only will be paid Pharmaceutical Allowance, Telephone Allowance and will be given the Pensioner Concession Card, with access to the pharmaceutical and other concessions available to card holders.

Under Welfare to Work, the criteria for Employment Entry Payment will be broadened. Newstart and Youth Allowance (other) recipients with partial capacity to work will receive Employment Entry Payment of \$312 if they have income from employment that exceeds the threshold amount and the employment is likely to last at least four weeks. Employment Entry Payment of \$312 will also be available to Newstart and Youth Allowance (other) recipients with partial capacity to work if they have been receiving income support payments continuously for at least 12 months and they commence work of, or increase their hours of work to, at least 15 hours per week, for a period of at least four weeks. Employment Entry Payment can be paid no more than once in a 12 month period.

Mobility Allowance

From 1 July 2006, there will be two levels of Mobility Allowance available to people who are unable to use public transport without substantial assistance due to disability. The new, higher rate of Mobility Allowance (\$100 per fortnight) will be payable to people on Newstart, Youth Allowance or DSP who are working at

least 15 hours per week at award wages, or looking for such work under an agreement with an employment service provider. People who move off income support into employment will be able to continue receiving the higher rate of Mobility Allowance. The current rate of Mobility Allowance (\$69.70 per fortnight) will remain payable to people working and/or doing voluntary work and/or training for at least 32 hours over a four week period.

Employment Assistance

The Australian Government funds employment services, such as the Job Network and specialist disability employment services, to assist job seekers with disability. Services are available to help with employment preparation, job search and placement, and/or post placement support. Under the Welfare to Work package, the Australian Government announced additional funding for these services and for vocational rehabilitation services, which assist people needing rehabilitation to return to work. Additional funding has also been allocated to the Personal Support Programme which assists people with multiple non vocational barriers to work. From 1 July 2006, a new pre vocational participation assistance account will be available to fund short term interventions, such as cognitive behaviour therapy, behaviour management and modification interventions, pain management and counselling programmes. These short interventions will be recommended to job seekers assessed as ready for referral to Job Network with such assistance.

Employer Demand Strategy

The Australian Government has introduced a Welfare to Work Employer Demand Strategy. The strategy is aimed at encouraging and assisting employers in key industry sectors to employ people with disability, parents, very long term unemployed people and mature aged people. This includes working with employers to determine the flexible work needs of employees, examining the business case for flexible working arrangements, identifying potential barriers to their implementation, and highlighting innovative arrangements and best practice.

The strategy also includes specific incentives to encourage employers to provide job opportunities for people with disability. For example, the Workplace Modifications Scheme can provide financial assistance to an employer to make the workplace suitable for an employee with disability. Up to \$10,000 is available to reimburse the cost of leasing, hiring or buying workplace modifications or adaptive equipment. Another important measure to increase employer demand is an Australian online information and advisory service modelled on the US Job Accommodation Network site (JAN). The Department is currently starting to develop this "one-stop shop" for information to be launched in mid 2006. This service will incorporate a web based service with information for employers, employment services and people with disability, including access to a searchable online data base and specialist phone consultants.

More information on the Australian Government's 'Welfare to Work' reforms is available at:

<http://www.workplace.gov.au/w2w>

11. Resources

WWDA Information and Referral Directory

The WWDA Information and Referral Directory is regularly being updated and expanded. It contains an extensive amount of information about services and organizations across a wide range of issue areas. Just some examples of what you can find include:

- All disability and related organizations across Australia, including national organizations;
- Every legal centre and service in Australia;
- Organisations Australia wide that provide individual advocacy services to people with disabilities;
- Information on where to go to get aids and equipment;
- Details of services that can help with assisted reproduction;
- Agencies that deal with violence and abuse, including listings of crisis services, women's shelters and more;
- All women's health centres, services and organizations around Australia;

And much, much more.

Go to: <http://www.wwda.org.au/portmain.htm>

Parenting & Disability Website

This website has been developed by a disabled mum in the US. It provides on line forums; personal stories; support, information and more. Is mainly targeted at people with physical disabilities.

Go to: <http://www.parentsonwheels.com>

Through the Looking Glass (TLG)

Through the Looking Glass (TLG) is a nationally recognized center that has pioneered research, training, and services for families in which a child, parent or grandparent has a disability or medical issue. TLG is a disability community based nonprofit organization based in California, USA. Site includes an online Parenting With Disability Newsletter.

Go to: <http://lookingglass.org/index.php>

The Disabled Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Birth

Judith Rogers, OTR/L. Demos Publishers (2005). 532 pages

The Disabled Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Birth supports the right of all women to choose motherhood, and will be useful for any disabled woman who desires to have a child. This comprehensive guide is based on the experiences of ninety women with disabilities who chose to have children. In order to bring an intimate focus and understanding to the issues involved in being pregnant and disabled, Judi conducted in-depth interviews with women with 22 different types of disabilities and with a total of 143 pregnancies. This book is a practical guide both for disabled women planning for pregnancy and the health professionals who work with them.

The subjects covered include: an introduction to the ninety women and their specific disabilities; the decision to have a baby; parenting with a disability; emotional concerns of the mother, family and friends; nutrition and exercise in pregnancy; a look at each trimester; labor and delivery; caesarean delivery; the postpartum period; and breast-feeding. A list of references and a glossary will assist the reader in obtaining additional information and understanding medical terminology.

Order Forms for *The Disabled Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Birth* are available from:

Go to: <http://lookingglass.org/publications/index.php>



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