



# Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) Update Report October 2005

*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](http://www.wwda.org.au)). Please find below a brief Update Report from WWDA for the month of October 2005. If you have any questions, or would like more information on anything in this report, please email Carolyn or Angela at: [wwda@wwda.org.au](mailto:wwda@wwda.org.au).*

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

In 2001, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly agreed to a proposal for an international convention on the rights of people with disability, called the draft "Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities". A committee was set up to discuss what should be in the convention, called the Ad Hoc Committee. The Sixth Session of the Ad Hoc Committee was held from 1 to 12 August 2005 at the United Nations headquarters in New York to discuss the draft text of the proposed Convention.

WWDA has participated in a range of consultations on the development of the proposed Convention. In February 2004, WWDA provided a detailed Submission to the Federal Government on the Draft Convention (see <http://www.wwda.org.au/unconvsub2.htm>)

Following the Sixth Session of the Ad Hoc Committee in August 2005, the Chairman of the Committee (Don MacKay) prepared a "Chair's text", reflecting the work to date, streamlining the draft Convention in light of that, and making suggestions as to how some of the differences of view might be bridged. That text has now been completed, and comment is sought.

WWDA has strongly argued that any UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, MUST contain a separate Article dealing with women with disabilities. Such an article would recognize 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.

The need for a separate article dealing with women with disabilities remains a contentious point in the development of the Draft Convention. The issue appears to be whether there is a need for a separate article or whether this could be covered in other parts of the draft convention. This fundamental issue has not been resolved, and the Chairman has urged delegations to come to the next session of the Ad Hoc Committee (January 2006) with flexible instructions which would enable them to reach agreement on this, whatever the outcome.

The Federal Attorney General's Department has recently made available a small amount of funding for consultations with the disability sector on the Chair's Text. WWDA will be contributing to these consultations and arguing strongly our position on the need for a separate article. A copy of the Chair's Text, along with other material relating to the UN Convention can be viewed at:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/>

## **2. WWDA Annual Report Released**

WWDA's Annual Report for 2004-05 was released in late October 2005. The Annual Report details a number of significant outcomes achieved by the organization during the past year. WWDA's systemic advocacy in relation to the Federal Government's proposed Welfare to Work and Industrial Relations reforms has been a major focus for our organization over the past year. Another major project for WWDA has been the development of an accessible Information and Referral Directory for Women With Disabilities, which is now available on our website ([www.wwda.org.au](http://www.wwda.org.au)) and provides an extensive amount of information on a wide range of services & organisations at national, state, regional and local levels.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) receives a small amount of funding each year from the Commonwealth Government and employs two staff. The organization relies heavily on the volunteer efforts of its members. The achievements of the organization serve to demonstrate the unique capacity of WWDA to fulfill the role of providing effective consumer advocacy to address the needs of women with disabilities and sound policy advice and quality information for and about women with disabilities. The Annual Report also demonstrates WWDA's strong links to its membership base, along with the strategic partnerships the organization has formed with other stakeholders.

WWDA's Annual Report 2004-05 has been distributed widely to all members and key stakeholders. If anyone would like a copy of WWDA's Annual Report 2004-05 emailed to them, please contact the WWDA Office via email on: [wwda@wwda.org.au](mailto:wwda@wwda.org.au). The Annual Report 2004-05 will also soon be available on WWDA's Website.

## **3. WWDA Management Committee Members 2005-06**

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in late October via teleconference. At the AGM, the following members were elected to the WWDA Management Committee:

Annie Parkinson (NSW)

Helen Meekosha (NSW)

Pamela Menere (rural VIC)  
Sheila King (QLD)  
Vicki Alipasinopoulos (VIC)  
Sue Salthouse (ACT)  
Jill Fowler (SA)  
Kate List (rural NSW)  
Lina Pane (VIC)  
Josephine Dixon (VIC)

Joyce Deering (NT), Samantha Jenkinson (VIC), and Margie Charlesworth (SA) stepped down from the WWDA Management Committee at the AGM. WWDA acknowledges the significant contribution these women have made to the organization during their time on the Management Committee, and looks forward to continuing to work with them in their role as WWDA members.

#### **4. Welfare-to-Work Reforms & Industrial Relations - Update**

Sue Salthouse (WWDA Welfare-to-Work spokesperson) was interviewed by Swedish Reporter Mikael Pettersson from Rapport which is the biggest news program in Sweden to discuss the Welfare-to-Work Reforms & Industrial Relations Reforms. The Swedish Government has expressed interest in the reforms proposed in Australia and Rapport commissioned Pettersson to get background information by coming to Australia and interviewing people involved both in government and in the workplace. Rapport's homepage is unfortunately in Swedish <http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=30624>, but there is one English page with some general info about Sveriges Television [http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=37123&lid>About SVT](http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=37123&lid>About_SVT).

WWDA has received a number of requests for copies of the NATSEM report '*The distributional impact of the Welfare-to-Work Reforms on Australians with Disabilities*'. Most requests have come from Advocacy agencies, with some from Open Employment Services.

On October 27, the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) announced that agreement has been reached with the National Centre for Economic and Social Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra to conduct further modelling on aspects of the Government's Welfare to Work policy. Marie Coleman, Chair of the NFAW Social Policy Committee, said '*given the anticipated introduction of the enabling legislation into the House of Representatives next week, it is very timely that we can promise additional modelling on options to reduce some of the disastrously adverse impacts of the current policy. We will be able to provide authoritative NATSEM tables showing the distributional impacts of some affordable policy modifications for sole parents and people with disabilities*'. Mrs Coleman said that the additional work would be of great use to members and Senators in considering the detail of the Government's legislative proposals. She added: '*We are particularly grateful and indebted to the generosity of the Don Chipp Foundation which has provided the grant to enable us to contract this work, which will contribute to a better informed public debate.*'

The announcement of the new study was welcomed by the '*What Women Want*' consortium of national women's organisations. The consortium will hold a second Canberra workshop on November 11, to consider the legislation to enact the Welfare to Work and the WorkChoices policies. The consortium will also seek to appear before the planned Senate Enquiry into the WorkChoices legislation.

Additional information on the '*What Women Want*' project, prior media releases and previous related NATSEM research is available from the following websites:

<http://www.security4women.com> (Security for Women)  
<http://www.ywca.org.au/womenspeak> (Womenspeak Network)  
<http://www.awcaus.org.au> (Australian Women's Coalition)  
<http://www.nfaw.org> (National Foundation for Australian Women)  
<http://www.natsem.canberra.edu.au> (National Centre for Economic and Social Modelling)

## 5. WWDA Presentation at Conference: Fair Go, Going, Gone? Public Policy & the Reframing of Values

'Widespread acceptance and use of terms such as 'War on Terror', 'Welfare Dependency', and 'Industrial Relations Reform' are only a few examples of how conservatives have framed the public policy debate in Australia over the last decade. This conservative framing has seen progressives losing the fight for a public policy language that resonates with most Australians. It's time for progressives to recapture the public policy debate in Australia!'

This action-oriented conference is aimed at re-framing public policy according to progressive Australian values of fairness and equality. Sue Salthouse will be presenting a paper "*The Puppetry of Poverty*" on behalf of WWDA at the Conference. Sue's paper will focus on the Federal Government's proposed welfare to work and industrial relations reforms, as they impact on women with disabilities. The Conference will be held on 4 & 5 November, 2005 at the QV Women's Centre, Melbourne. The Conference is being presented by the RMIT Community Advocacy Unit.

For more information about this Conference, you can contact:

RMIT Community Advocacy Unit  
Ph: 03 99252910  
Email: [advocacy@rmit.edu.au](mailto:advocacy@rmit.edu.au)  
Web: <http://advocacy.tce.rmit.edu.au>

A copy of Sue's Paper "*The Puppetry of Poverty*" will soon be made available on WWDA's website. If anyone would like a copy of the Paper emailed to them, please contact the WWDA Office via email on: [wwda@wwda.org.au](mailto:wwda@wwda.org.au)

## 6. Research Project: Financial literacy of marginalised groups of women

RPR Consulting has been contracted by the Office for Women (Department of Family and Community Services) to research and consult widely to :

- identify issues for women from marginalised groups in regards to their financial literacy
- identify the financial information needs women have at particular stages of their lives
- examine how these women access financial information and the barriers they encounter
- discuss opportunities to improve the financial literacy of marginalised groups of women.

RPR Consulting is currently doing a literature review to find out what research has been done in this field and from that will write a discussion paper to form the basis of discussion at a series of roundtables, one each to be held in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Perth.

Margaret Cooper (WWDA Member) will be representing WWDA at the Melbourne Roundtable on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Margaret will report back to WWDA members through the next WWDA Update Bulletin.

For more information about this Project, you can contact:

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Principal Consultant  
RPR Consulting  
Level 1, 157 Great North Road  
Five Dock NSW 2046  
Ph: 02 9712 5055

Email: sue@rprconsulting.com.au

Web: www.rprconsulting.com.au

## 7. WWDA Telecommunications Working Group - Update

The Telecommunications Consumer Representation Grant project for 1 October 04 to 30 September 05, was completed on time and within budget. A report on the activities of the Project was forwarded to the department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts on 12 October.

WWDA was successful in its application for a subsequent Grant of just over \$8000. The Grant period is from 1 October 2005 to 30 June 2006. This will bring the grants back in line with financial years. The merger of the Australian Communications Authority and the Australian Broadcasting Authority into the Australian Communications and Media Authority has brought about a review of the grant system. WWDA contributed to the review process in making a submission to the *'Review of the Telecommunications Consumer Representation & Telecommunications Research Grants Program'* to DCITA. Copies of the Submission and report are available from:

sudata@optusnet.com.au or wwda@wwda.org.au.

The new project has started with a number of representative activities:

- Margaret Cooper participated in the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's conference to review their Disability Action Plan and to look at areas where most complaints are received, and to review the changes to their work brought about by the formation of ACMA;
- Margherita Coppolino participated in the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Accessibility and Usability Workshop (ASTAP) in Melbourne on 27 October. ASTAP is the body which looks at uniformity of telecommunications standards for the region. The main objective of the Tenth APT Standardization Program Forum was to review progress of the ASTAP Expert Groups since the 9th ASTAP Forum held in Thailand; explore regional initiatives in accessibility and usability planning; develop communications standardization input to the Asia Pacific Telecommunications regional preparatory process for the International Telecommunications Union Plenipotentiary Conference 2006; consider initiatives in new technologies. The conference was attended by delegates from the region, and had range of speakers from both Australia and the region. It was largely organised by Gunela Astbrink, the TEDICORE Policy Advisor and Rapporteur to the ASTAP Group.
- Sue Salthouse has given advice to Charity Computers (ACT) on the establishment of a system of in-home visits to isolated people with disabilities to deliver training, install hardware and software, and repair equipment. This new service will augment the already comprehensive services which Charity Computers run in supplying refurbished computers at low cost to people on pensions. The service is supported by the ACT Digital Divide initiatives.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) has recently released its Annual Report 2004-05. The TIO is a free and independent alternative dispute resolution scheme for small business and residential consumers in Australia who have a complaint about their telephone or Internet service. Established in 1993 by the Australian Federal Government, the TIO is independent of industry, the government and consumer organisations. The TIO is authorised to investigate complaints about the provision or supply of telephone or Internet services.

The Annual Report shows for example that:

- the TIO handled 97,798 contacts in 2004/05 – a 28.8% increase on last year's total of 75,904;
- total contacts included 18,883 out-of-jurisdiction enquiries and 78,915 complaints;
- the 78,915 complaints investigated in 2004/05 were 31.9% more than the 59,850 complaints investigated last year;
- 44.2% of complaint issues handled by the TIO were about landline services, 39.9% were about mobile services and 15.9% were about internet services.

The TIO Annual report 2004/05 is now available in PDF and HTML format on the TIO website at:  
[http://www.tio.com.au/publications/annual\\_reports/ar2005/annual\\_2005index.htm](http://www.tio.com.au/publications/annual_reports/ar2005/annual_2005index.htm)

Hard copies can also be ordered. For more information contact:

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO)  
Ph: 03 8600 8797  
Fax: 03 8600 8700  
Email: [tio@tio.com.au](mailto:tio@tio.com.au)  
Web: <http://www.tio.com.au>

## **8. Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Congress Re-imagining Australian Society – visions and solutions**

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) is the peak council of the community services and welfare sector. Established in 1956, ACOSS is the national voice for the needs of people affected by poverty and inequality.

Given recent changes to Australia's society and the community sector, the ACOSS Annual Congress in November is an opportune time to come together to learn, discuss and develop solutions to pressing national issues. Confirmed speakers include: The Hon. Prime Minister John Howard, The Hon. Leader of the Opposition Kim Beazley, Senior Lecturer Eva Cox (AO), Law & Indigenous Studies Professor Larissa Behrendt, Economics Professor Bob Gregory, National Roundtable of Non-profit Organisations Chair Robert Fitzgerald. The Congress will be held 10 November 2005 - 11 November 2005 in Brisbane.

Sheila King (WWDA Member) will be representing WWDA at the ACOSS Congress and a copy of her report on the Congress will be available in the next WWDA Update Bulletin.

For more information on the ACOSS Congress, you can contact:

ACOSS  
Ph: 02 93104844  
Email: [acoss@hotelnetwork.com.au](mailto:acoss@hotelnetwork.com.au)  
Web: [www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

## **9. Push for National Bill of Rights**

Australia is the only Western country without a national Human Rights Act or equivalent. 'A Bill of rights for Australia is the only way to safeguard against the "wholesale removal of people's rights" that took place with reforms that violated civil liberties', leading legal professionals said last week. In articles published in the journal of the Australian Lawyers Alliance, that organisation, the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory John Stanhope, leading human rights lawyer Julian Burnside QC, and constitutional lawyer George Williams have linked arms in a push for a Bill of Rights, which they said will entrench fundamental rights to freedoms in law.

New Matilda (the independent online magazine and policy portal) is hosting a campaign for a Human Rights Act. The Right Honourable Malcolm Fraser launched the Human Rights Act for Australia campaign at the Sydney Town Hall on 5 October 2005. A draft Human Rights Bill has been produced and is now available for comment. The Bill seeks to honour Australia's international obligations under the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It will also draw on the experiences of Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the ACT, which have Human Rights instruments.

New Matilda wishes to consult widely on its draft Bill. Individuals and organisations are invited to provide submissions on the draft bill.

To find out more about the campaign, or to put yourself on the campaign mailing list, contact:

Nick Carney  
Executive Officer of the Campaign  
Ph: 0418 688 693  
Email: [nicholas.carney@newmatilda.com](mailto:nicholas.carney@newmatilda.com)  
Web: [www.newmatilda.com](http://www.newmatilda.com)

A copy of the Draft Human Rights Bill is available for download via the New Matilda website ([www.newmatilda.com](http://www.newmatilda.com))

## **10. New Disability Business Services website**

Access to an online catalogue of products and services offered by disability business services across Australia is now available (Disability business services used to be known as 'sheltered workshops'). The Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Kay Patterson, officially launched a new disability business website, [www.bizAbility.com.au](http://www.bizAbility.com.au), at Ozanam Industries in Sydney in late October.

"The BizAbility website will link individuals, communities, businesses and government to existing business services' websites and will eventually include provision for online transaction," Senator Patterson said. "The website, supported by the Howard Government, aims to extend the market reach of 230 independent business services operating in 390 locations throughout Australia, through the promotion of their products and services online.

For more information on the range of products and services available visit [www.bizAbility.com.au](http://www.bizAbility.com.au)

## **11. Advice for Carers Information Kit Released**

In late October, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Kay Patterson, officially launched the Advice for Carers Information Kit at the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre Western Metropolitan Region in Footscray, Victoria. "The kit will strengthen the links between services and carers by providing information about services available from the Department of Family and Community Services, Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office" Senator Patterson said.

The kit may be obtained from Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres by calling 1800 242 636 (Free call except from mobile phones where mobile phone rates will apply).

## **12. Victims Support Agency in Victoria – Development of Victims Charter**

On 14 September 2005, the Victorian Attorney General launched a community consultation paper on a proposed Victims' Charter for Victoria. A community consultation process is currently being undertaken throughout Victoria by the Victims Support Agency.

For more information on the consultation process or to obtain a copy of the consultation paper, contact:

Victims Support Agency

GPO Box 4349QQ, Melbourne 3001  
Ph: (03) 8662 1700  
Fax: (03) 8662 1777  
Web: [www.justice.vic.gov.au/victimsofcrime](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/victimsofcrime)

Margherita Coppolino (WWDA Member) will be representing WWDA at one of the Melbourne based consultations. A Report will be made available in forthcoming WWDA Update Reports.



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