

Women with Disabilities Victoria

Who are we?

We are an organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities.

Our vision is for a world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.

Through research, advocacy, and community education, we focus on those areas that have the biggest impact on the lives of women with disabilities in Victoria:

- violence against women with disabilities
- access to inclusive health care for women with disabilities
- the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- access to mainstream services
- leadership opportunities for women with disabilities

We do not provide individual advocacy or support services to women with disabilities but work at a policy and community development level.

What issues do women with disabilities face?

Nearly one in every five Victorian women has a disability.

The numbers of women with disabilities are higher in culturally diverse communities, in rural and regional Victoria, and among Indigenous people.

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We are:

- more likely to be poor and unemployed
- less likely to get a good education and access to vocational training and employment programs
- less likely to receive appropriate health and health promotion services
- more likely to be homeless, live in insecure or unsafe housing, and pay most of our gross income on housing
- more likely to experience physical, psychological and sexual violence, in settings such as custodial, residential and health care
- perceived as more vulnerable and targeted for violence, and less likely to secure protection or see justice delivered
- exposed to practices which qualify as torture or inhuman or degrading treatment such as interventions to control fertility, forced medication, and chemical restraint.

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What does Women with Disabilities Victoria do?

Our mission is to lead the way for Victorian women with disabilities and to address the barriers many of us face. We do this through:

- education, training and mentoring
- community education and professional training
- research, policy advice and advocacy
- empowerment of women with disabilities.

More than just advocate, we lead by example. We model the world we want to see. Our Board members and the majority of our staff are women with disabilities. Not only are we unique, we are passionate about our work and we practice what we preach.

Some of our work includes:

Voices against the Violence: the most significant research ever into the family violence experiences of women with disabilities in Victoria, conducted over two years by Women with Disabilities Victoria, the Office of the Public Advocate and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Enabling Women: a 4 day leadership program to deepen the understanding of issues affecting women with disabilities and empower women to lead and advocate in their own community

Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program: for frontline disability workers and managers, to further support their understanding of gender and disability inequity and violence prevention.



“Women with Disabilities Victoria is testament to the hard work and advocacy of many women over many years. At its heart is the belief that what women want is equality – to participate in public life, to have fun, to work, to access health services, to be part of the overall community.

“...What women want is to do this in a way that they define, ... (it) is fundamental to acknowledging that women with disabilities have the same human rights as anyone else! ‘Nothing about us without us’ is even more critical when we see the additional challenges that women with a disability face, when we think about violence against women, which may be perpetuated by carers or partners, and their role as parents.

“When advocacy is funded it strengthens the government’s work. The work that has been done by Women with Disabilities Victoria has made for a stronger response by government, and has added to the worth and value of support and opportunities for women with disabilities around Victoria.”

Dr Helen Szoke, then Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commissioner, in *Women with Disabilities Victoria: Claiming Our Future*

How to work with us

For more information or to contribute to our work, contact our office:

Phone: (03) 9286 7800

Email: wdv@wdv.org.au

Mail: GPO Box 1160, Melbourne VIC 3001

Website: www.wdv.org.au

Membership is open to both individuals and to organisations who share our aims.