



About Women with Disabilities Victoria

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) is a member-led Not for Profit organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. In explaining the need for WDV's work, this factsheet briefly touches on issues affecting women with disabilities, a topic expanded on in Fact Sheet 2.

Who are we?

The majority of our Board, members, and staff are women with disabilities representing a diversity of experiences, skills and interests.

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

We aim to advance real social and economic inclusion for women with disabilities in Victoria.

How do we achieve our mission?

Women with Disabilities Victoria works to:

- be a voice for women with disabilities
- create opportunities for women with disabilities to be visible and to be heard in their communities
- build partnerships to deliver the best results for women with disabilities, and
- engage the community to challenge attitudes and myths about women with disabilities.

We provide systemic advocacy through:

- research and policy advice
- community education and
- professional training.

Empowerment and leadership programs are run in conjunction with local councils for individual women with disabilities.

Why is there a need for Women with Disabilities Victoria?

On all measures of social and economic participation (housing security, income, employment and education), women with disabilities experience higher levels of disadvantage compared to women and men without disabilities.

These disadvantages have even greater impact for those of us who are women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

For more information relating to barriers affecting women as a result of disability, including key statistics, please refer to Fact Sheet 2.

Our priorities

Our current priority areas are:

- preventing and responding to violence against women with disabilities
- working to make the NDIS relevant and responsive to women with disabilities and empower women to engage with the new system and
- promoting access to health services for women with disabilities.

Our goals

We aim to:

- Influence policy. Influence government and the community to recognize and remove barriers to full participation by women with disabilities.
- Empower women. Engage and empower women with disabilities to lead and influence their communities.
- Influence services. Educate and build the capacity of service systems and organisations to be accessible to women with disabilities.

How do we influence policy?

WDV influences policy through conducting research, such as Voices Against Violence, the most significant research into the family violence experiences of women with disabilities in Victoria, conducted over two years by WDV, the Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. We provide specialist policy advice and representation to government, contribute to government submissions, and consult with other organisations in the sector.

How do we empower women?

The **Enabling Women Leadership Program** empowers women with disabilities to speak up and have a voice about issues that relate to them, and other women with disabilities. The program builds on, and expands the knowledge, skills, tools, and networks of women with disabilities, so that they are confident to take on advocacy and leadership roles within their communities.

The **Enabling Women Mentoring Program** runs alongside the Enabling Women Leadership Program. Participants are individually matched with a woman who may or may not identify with lived experience of disability, who will take on the role of mentor. These mentors are well connected in the area in which the Program is running and will assist their program mentee to achieve a leadership goal of the mentee's choosing.

Community Inclusion – We enlist the support of regional partners to facilitate the relationship between women with disabilities and accessing the local community.

WDV has also undertaken projects to explore and support the needs of isolated women with disabilities. This has included finding out who isolated women are and what issues are important to them.

We also run the bi-annual **Brenda Gabe Leadership Award** which recognises and celebrates the achievements the contribution women with disabilities have made, that is of direct benefit to women with disabilities, or to making a more inclusive community, in Victoria.

How do we influence services?

We offer workforce development to disability and other community and social service organisations.

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

WDV influences workforces by developing information and training for workers who may interact with women with disabilities experiencing family violence. In particular, WDV has focused on supporting family violence and disability workers.

We also work alongside health care and health promotion services to ensure inclusion for women with disabilities.

Get involved!

The best way to join the WDV community is to become a member. Membership is open to individuals and organisations. If you are a woman with a disability, membership is free.

<https://www.wdv.org.au/get-involved/membership/>

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