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## Conclusion

This research has aimed to 'build the evidence' about the extent to which current Victorian family violence policy and practice recognises and provides for women with disabilities who experience violence.

Overall this report highlights the disabling environments that prevent women with disabilities from knowing about, let alone accessing, the services they need in order to escape from violence. These points are summarised in the section on 'findings' in the Executive Summary. In addition, the recommendations – presented collectively in the Executive Summary – indicate the steps that need to be taken in order to rectify the situation as it now stands.

The first two sections provide the introductory background to this project with section one explaining its aim, scope, methodology and understanding of family violence. Section two provides a theoretical, current policy, legislative and human rights context in which to situate violence against women with disabilities. In particular, it draws upon a review of international and Australian literature on what is currently known about the incidence and nature – and responses to – violence against women with disabilities, thus showing the challenges to translating the concerns and needs of women of all abilities into Victoria's new integrated family violence response system that was initiated from the early to mid 2000s.

The substantive findings of the research are reported on in sections three to eight. Each section is devoted, respectively, to: the help-seeking experiences of four Victorian women with disabilities who were interviewed; the views of family violence workers' in working with women with disabilities in the family violence response system; issues relating to disability and violence data collection by government and relevant sectors; an analysis of eight family violence sector standards, codes and guidelines; workforce development; and positive developments in service responses to women with disabilities experiencing violence in Victoria and jurisdictions beyond. Most sections conclude with a summary or conclusion and specific recommendations.

The analysis of available data on disability and family violence, family violence standards, codes and guidelines, and the consultations with women and family violence workers confirm what is in the literature: that there is a minimal response to supporting women with disabilities experiencing violence. There is considerable work that needs to be undertaken at policy, research and service delivery levels in order to improve the capacity of family violence services to respond to women with disabilities experiencing violence. This will require significant resourcing as our analysis of best practice in Australia and overseas indicates that it takes a sustained and cross-sectoral collaborative effort to affect positive changes of benefit to women with disabilities experiencing violence.

A key finding – and recommendation – is that a three-part strategy be adopted in order to improve, develop and sustain service improvements for women with disabilities experiencing violence *throughout the state*. This is in keeping with a human rights approach. A human rights approach is one that ensures the core human rights principles of equality, human dignity, mutual respect, freedom from

violence, participation and empowerment, accountability, equity and access are reflected in the strategies, policies and practices adopted to improve family violence services to women with disabilities.

This approach requires:

- 1) The incorporation of issues facing women with disabilities into all aspects of the family violence service system.
- 2) The resourcing of specific initiatives to address issues for women with disabilities that can serve as 'beacons' of good practice.
- 3) The resourcing and further strengthening of existing specialist disability and family violence advocacy services and peak bodies to expand their capacity to provide advice, secondary consultation and education to the family violence service response system.

It remains to be said that making things right for women with disabilities means making things right for women of *all abilities* who experience violence. It is only in working together that we will achieve this vision.