

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

What issues do women with disabilities face?

Nearly one in every five Victorian women has a disability.

Disability is more common among women from culturally diverse communities, in rural and regional Victoria, and among Indigenous people.

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

Compared to women and men without disabilities, we:

- Have lower levels of education
- Are more likely to live on low incomes
- Are more likely to live in rental accommodation and unaffordable housing
- Are less likely to be in paid employment
- Have low levels of social support and less extensive social networks
- Experience high levels of concentrated disadvantage

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

Compared to men with disabilities, we are:

- More likely to live on low incomes
- More likely to live in rental accommodation and unaffordable housing
- Less likely to be in paid employment

In comparison to women without disabilities who experience violence and abuse we are:

- less likely to receive appropriate support services
- more likely to be homeless and live in insecure and unsafe housing
- more likely to experience physical, psychological and sexual violence, in settings such as custodial, residential and health care

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- perceived as more vulnerable and targeted for violence, and less likely to secure protection or to see justice delivered
- exposed to practices which qualify as torture or inhumane or degrading treatment such as interventions to control fertility, forced medication, and chemical restraint.

When it comes to health we have poor access to both health care and health promotion services.

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:

- research, policy advice and advocacy
- community education and professional training
- empowerment and leadership for 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 practise what we preach.

Some of our work includes:

Voices Against 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 5 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 get in touch with us

For more information contact our office:

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Membership is open to both individuals and to organisations who share our aims, and is free for women with disabilities.

www.wdv.org.au/get_involved.htm#Membership