

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Distribution

Women with Disabilities Victoria get a Year's Funding Reprieve

After weeks of uncertainty, Women with Disabilities Victoria is delighted to announce we have received a further year's funding for the vital community engagement arm of our organisation. This means our four [Hubs across Victoria](#) will reopen and our [Women's Empowerment programs](#) will be offered again. We will be able to retain many of our skilled staff, whose jobs would have been made redundant by the funding shortfall.

This funding reprieve allows us to operate until June 2025. However, we are still working to find long-term sustainable funding for this important work so it can continue undisrupted.

Co-Chair of Women with Disabilities Victoria, Elyse Cox, expressed gratitude for the recent news: "We deeply appreciate the support from our members, community, and of course Minister Bill Shorten and other Parliamentarians who have stood by our work. It is vital that WDV, our programs, and initiatives are funded sustainably and well-resourced. Our community faces disproportionate challenges and barriers to living and thriving in society, and the findings of Royal Commissions, along with countless inquiries and reviews, reveal this truth. As a peak body organisation, our advocacy is grounded in the lived experiences of women and non-binary people with disabilities, drawing from this lived experience as a wellspring of insight and expertise. And central to this advocacy is our right to inform how government policies affect us and to influence the policies that shape our lives."

The funding will continue the employment of many skilled members of the Community Inclusion and Women's Empowerment team. "We are thrilled about the successful outcome of our transitional funding, a testament to the decade of unwavering dedication and expertise that Women with Disabilities Victoria has cultivated in advocating for and empowering women and non-binary people with disabilities. This funding is a vital reinforcement of our commitment to employing women and non-binary people with disabilities, ensuring their integral roles within our organisation," said WDV Board Director, Talitha Travers.

"This funding supports our mission to enhance the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability which creates meaningful employment opportunities and fostering community participation. By establishing hubs in regional areas, we are expanding access to essential supports, improving self-advocacy, and centring lived experiences, ultimately driving better outcomes for our communities. This investment is a significant step towards building a future where every person with disability is empowered to thrive and participate fully in all aspects of life".

Liz Wright, Manager of the Community Inclusion and Women's Empowerment team affirmed, "we will be reopening the hubs at Melbourne Outer East, Moira, Barwon and Bendigo as quickly as possible to continue their important work increasing access and inclusion of women with disability in regional areas. The outpouring of dismay and support from the community about the potential loss of funding was indicative of the value of this program and its activities in the community."

Our WDV Hub members have come to relish and rely on the monthly Hub meetings. For many, the Hub was their only social connection and sole source of disability advocacy and pride.

"We have been able to make safe spaces for women to congregate, campaign and connect. The Hubs' valuable contributions have covered many issues including health services, public transport, accessibility of local law courts and has led to hub members initiating peer to peer support groups, undertaking media training, and gaining meaningful employment," Liz continued.

The Enabling Women Leadership program has just celebrated 10 years of operation. 2023 Enabling Young Women graduate Julia Coscolluela said about the program, "when I think about what a leader looks like, that person doesn't look like me, so doing a program like this, helps me really... visualise and accept that I **can** be a leader, and I do have... what it takes to make really positive changes in the community and that my voice has... value, and that I deserve a seat at the table."

Elyse Cox stated: "While we are relieved to see the continuation of this essential program, we must also recognise that this is just the beginning. Significant challenges remain for people with disabilities and the advocacy organisations that support them - particularly those that centre the lived experience of marginalised groups. We view this news as a positive sign of broader recognition for the critical work being done at WDV. We are eager and ready to engage in further discussions that lead to real solutions that secure and protect disability advocacy, which will inevitably lead to better outcomes for everyone in our community."

Ends

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More about Community Inclusion and Women's Empowerment Programs.

The Hubs – monthly in person meetings

- Melbourne Outer East (Upper Fern Tree Gully area)
- Moira (Cobram area)
- Barwon (Geelong and surrounding districts)
- Bendigo (Bendigo and surrounding districts).

Women and non-binary people with disability can join a WDV Hub by contacting Sarah Franzoni on (03) 9286 7827 or sara.franzoni@wdv.org.au

The Enabling Women and Enabling Young Women Leadership Programs

Women and non-binary people with disability who would like to learn more about our upcoming Enabling Women Leadership programs can contact Bridget Jolley on (03) 9286 7813 or bridget.jolley@wdv.org.au

