What does it take?
Developing informed & effective tertiary responses to violence & abuse for women and girls with disabilities in Australia

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Women with Disabilities Australia
Hearing the voices of women with disability in research and practice

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INTRODUCTION

• Academic researchers: Dr Patsie Frawley, Deakin University; A/Prof Sue Dyson, La Trobe University; Dr Sally Robinson, Southern Cross University; Amie O’Shea, Deakin University.

• Research partners: Women with Disabilities Victoria and the Victorian CASA Forum

• Advisory group: People with Disability Australia, AWAVA, DVRC NSW, Advocacy for Inclusion

• Consultative research group: Women with disabilities
BACKGROUND

Despite social and political gains people, and in particular women, with disabilities still experience significant social exclusion (Frawley, Dyson & Robinson, 2015), including:

• five times more likely to suffer multiple and entrenched disadvantage
• less likely to have completed schooling to Year 12,
• less likely to be employed, be engaged in full time work or education,
• more likely to experience homelessness,
• more likely to feel unsafe in the community
• higher incidence of being victims of crime (Llewellyn, Emerson & Honey, 2013)
• Women with disabilities experience of IPV and sexual assault: (PSS) of all women over 18 years with a long term disability or health condition, 6% had experienced violence (ABS, 2012)
RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Aim:
To develop best practice guidelines for effective tertiary responses to gendered violence for women and girls with disabilities in Australia that are:
• informed by the experiences of women and girls with disabilities
• based on a thorough and critical review of existing evidence based models
• developed in collaboration with locally based cross sector communities of practice
• designed to strengthen a gendered understanding about violence in the disability sector

Research:
• Literature review
• National survey of services - sent to 400 services
• In-depth case study research with three sites
• Action research with cross sector action groups in each site to inform new and improved knowledge and practice
**SURVEY FINDINGS**

### Service responses

- No specialist services or approaches: 18
- Limited specialist services: 20
- Access to generic services with adaptations: 37
- Both specialist services and generic services with adaptations: 24

### Barriers to access and inclusion

- Lack of specialist skills: 76
- Lack of knowledge about disabilities: 36
- Lack of staff training: 42
- Inaccessible buildings: 25
- Lack of funding: 75
NATIONAL SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

- Women with disability ~ 15% of service users
- Barriers identified - building access, lack of staff training or knowledge, lack of funds, and lack of disability workers
- Specialist services developed - education modules for people with a disability, wheelchair friendly crisis accommodation, and intensive case management
- Adapted services - staff training on working with people with disabilities, adapted buildings and rooms, phone and internet counselling options, and changes to resources (including large text and/or pictures)
- 67% had engaged other services to adapt services – cross sector collaboration
- Services drew on a range state-based and national policies to inform their practice while also adapting or developing in-house policies, procedures, and action plans
“...wherever individuals experience a lack of autonomy or a ‘voice’ in a given socio-political context, participatory research may not only enable these voices to be heard but may also provide a rearticulation of perspectives in the face of silence or opacity. ...

Participatory research may provide a pertinent mechanism for the engagement of individuals, groups and communities and afford them a greater degree of autonomy and control.”

(Higginbottom & Liamputtong, 2015 p.14)
ADVISORY STRUCTURE

- Research Partners
  - Deakin University, La Trobe University, Southern Cross University, Undertake research
  - Women with Disabilities Victoria, Victorian CASA forum, Advice, promotion and connection to sectors

- Consultative research group
  - ‘Harder to reach’ women with disabilities; women with an intellectual disability, women with complex communication needs
  - Experiential knowledge; guide and advise research approach

- Research Advisory Group
  - Disability advocacy and violence against women sectors; PWDA, Advocacy for Inclusion ACT, DVNSW, AWAVA.
  - Connecting research to policy; guide and advise research approach
THE CONSULTATIVE RESEARCH GROUP

Meredith Allen  Jane Rosengrave  Janice Slattery

Heather Forsyth  Linda Stokoe
JANE ROSENGRAVE

• Why is it important for women with disabilities to have a say about research about abuse?

• How do you have a say about issues of abuse of women with disabilities?

• What are some of the things we have had to think about to support women with disabilities to participate?
WHAT WE DO IN THE CONSULTATIVE RESEARCH GROUP

• Talked about the best way to help women with disabilities to share their experiences in the focus groups and ways of checking in with everybody that they are OK

• Developing the CRG roles and responsibilities as research advisors
• Think about telling people about the research in the future
• Talk about different ways of hearing women's voices in the research
EMERGING THEMES FROM WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Services help with:

• Material help - 'the small things and the big things'
• Practical help - cleaning the house with me
• Navigating systems - getting in to the Doctor earlier, getting child care when needed
• “Getting DOCS off my back”
• “it makes you feel really good because sometimes they come to your house real bubbly and they go, ‘Oh your house looks really lovely today’ and stuff like that”
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