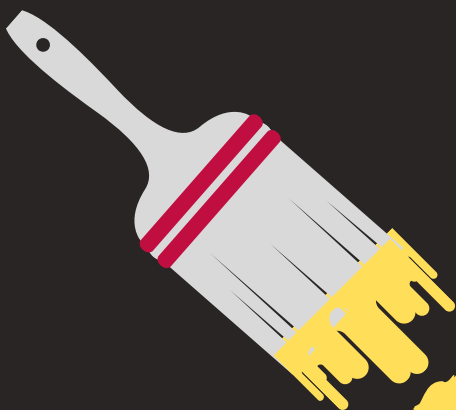


# The Here We Are Project Barwon



## TOOL KIT



WOMEN'S HEALTH  
AND WELLBEING  
Barwon South West Inc.



# The Backstory

Supported by Women with Disabilities Victoria and funded by the NDIS's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program woman with lived-experience of disability were employed by four like-minded organisations in regional Victoria. The Capacity Builder's role; to centre the stories and represent the needs of women with disability within their organisation. In June 2018 WHWBSW welcomed their new Community Engagement Officer.

# The Mission

Being mindful of the organisations Key Priority Areas and Strategic Plan, we began to consider; what practical actions could be implemented from within WHWBSW to move towards that ultimate goal of inclusion for women with disability in the region.

# The Introduction

Here We Are in the Community was an internally created article that was shared online, with local media and displayed at WHWBSW Geelong HQ to publicise and celebrate the arrival of the project.

**HWA in the Community**  
*Women with Disability;*  
 Connecting, Impacting and Defining the Community

**Introducing The Here We Are Project**

On July 01 2018, Geelong residents celebrated the five year anniversary of the initial roll out of the NDIS to the region, amongst the first in the nation. As the NDIS continues to grow and evolve across Australia, Geelong is once again at the forefront of the sector with the implementation of the Here We Are Project.

Identifying that once involved with the NDIS rollout, there were still spaces in the community where people with disability felt unwelcome or alienated, the NDIA established a new focus with the ILC; Information, Linkages and Capacity Building. They acknowledged that; "Genuine and meaningful community inclusion can only be achieved when people with disability, government and community work together. ILC will help bring people together to achieve that important goal. While ILC funding is distributed through grants, ILC is more than an ordinary grants program – it is a catalyst for change."

Representing some of the most marginalised people in our community **Women with Disabilities Victoria** took on this challenge for change, establishing the Here We Are Project, an initiative that has sourced partnering organisations and dedicated project workers in Gippsland, Cobram, Warrnambool and Geelong. Devoted to the betterment of Gender Equality and Equity for all women WDV found a natural ally with **Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West**. Trusted with this exciting project, that will bring inclusivity and intersectionality to the fore, is journalist and former local magazine editor; Brigitte Stone.

Enjoying a family life rich with diversity and inclusion, Brigitte has always made volunteering and forging friendships with people with disability a priority. The pinnacle of this, she says, are her now famed Karaoke sessions that she hosts annually at **VALID's Having A Say Conference**; a three-day event held at Geelong's Deakin University Waterfront Campus and is the largest conference for people with disabilities within Australia.

Recently Brigitte has also been lucky enough to be a 'pioneer' volunteer of **VALID's Choice Mentor Program**.

**"A CATALYST FOR CHANGE."**

Being matched with an incredible young woman they quickly fostered a beautiful friendship and Brigitte has had the honour of seeing her friend become a strong-willed adult and fantastic new mother. It was this relationship and several incidents in her personal life that inspired for Brigitte an interest in intersectional feminism and a desire to empower more women, particularly in possibly vulnerable situations.

Also from a personal perspective, Brigitte has had her own journey as a woman with disability following a traumatic car accident in 2011, which impacted all aspects of her life. Now armed with this experience, compassion and drive Brigitte is absolutely thrilled to be part of the Here We Are Project. "Working with these two amazing organisations; Women with Disabilities Victoria and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West is so motivating. The culture implicit in both is wonderfully encouraging and the vision they are working toward, an attainable future that will see brighter and more fulfilling lives for all women, including those with disabilities, in our community."

Now several months in, Brigitte and the Here We Are Project are already seeing a positive impact in the community. Encouraging local businesses and groups to actively think about women with disability and include their possible benefits as well as their possible needs tacitly in ongoing conversations, is the goal. A goal that will benefit the wider community. "When you make your space inclusive for women with disability, you are inviting a breadth of experience and knowledge. You are also opening your business or organisation up to a new audience, new customers and a new stream of potential revenue."

If you are a woman with disability, a disability support service provider, a local business or an organisation that might be interested in learning more about the **Here We Are Project** and how understanding the nuances of Gender Equity and Equality is crucial to the continued support of women with disability, contact Brigitte at [bstone@women.healthbarwon.org.au](mailto:bstone@women.healthbarwon.org.au)

**WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING**  
Barwon South West

**Womenwithdisabilitiesvictoria**  
empowering women

**ndis**  
National Disability Insurance Scheme

\*This project is funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Program.



## The Context

WHWBSW operates from a social model of health – acknowledging that health is shaped by a broad range of social, environmental and economic determinants – and within a feminist framework that considers the differing ways in which a women's life experiences intersect to shape identity (such as gender, race, sexuality and disability). – **Statement from the Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West INC. Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021**



Already demonstrating a strong commitment to intersectionality WHWBSW proved a prime pilot for the HWA Project with total organisational readiness.

## The Goals

**To encourage** WHWBSW to further their understanding of women with disability; their needs and the systemic discrimination that they may face, and the organisations responsibility in producing, hosting and committing to work that moves towards greater inclusion.

**To work** with WHWBSW staff and their partners on existing and ongoing projects, applying an intersectional lens.



# ● EXTERNALLY ●

## The Context

With the NDIS HQ, Workcover and TAC all taking up residence in the City of Greater Geelong, the once sleepy hollow has become a kind-of mecca for the disability industry in Australia. The COGG boasts promising Accessibility Projects and Inclusion Initiatives and has thus been moving in a positive direction.

## The Goals

**To utilise** the status and privileged position of WHWBSW within the Barwon South West Region, as a respected and trusted entity, to share, publicise and normalise the lives of women with disability.

**To celebrate** the exceptional achievements and promote the profiles of women with disability in our community.

**To promote** the profile of WHWBSW and their work to women with disability in our community.

**To advocate** to organisations, particularly within the growing disability sector the importance of applying a gendered lens when discussing access and inclusion.







# The Challenges

With the rollout of the NDIS and other major changes to services, for example, there has also been a disruption to the lives of people with disability throughout the region.

Indeed, this is a time of great excitement and overhaul but the importance of safety and comfort for the very real people living within this *change* needs focus, particularly for that of the local women. Despite the COGG's positive movement, the Barwon region is not without its hurdles to the implementation of the HWA project.

The dominance of major service providers throughout Geelong and the associated challenge of accessing women under these services poses a unique issue.

As does the sheer volume of individual cases the NDIS are experiencing; meaning their resources are currently overwhelmed in certain capacities. Whilst the presence of "another short-term project" could make it hard for the HWA project to achieve local backing externally and create traction with the individual women living with disability in the area.

Therefore, it is imperative for the HWA project to make positive relationships with disability services and organisations in the region as well as furthering the messages of the NDIS leading to greater community inclusion.

It will also be crucial to highlight that although a currently short-term project the work of HWA; the connections, the impact and the insight will remain. For WHWBSW, the partners, the community and most importantly women with disability in the region, the change created by the HWA project will endure.

With this toolkit we pass the baton to WHWBSW and the staff to continue on with this important initiative.



# TOOL KIT OVERVIEW

## The Modules

Aligning Our Key Priority Areas

Challenging Stereotypes and Shaping the Narrative

Inclusive Practises: Hosting & Posting Checklist

Creative Engagement – Art Medicine Workshop and Public Gallery Space

Showing up for Women with Disability





## ALIGNING OUR KEY PRIORITY AREAS

### Prevention of Violence Against Women

About 2.5% of women with disability had experienced partner violence in the previous 12 months, compared with just over 1.3% of women without disability.

The many forms of abuse and violence experienced by women with disability are unique and not a widely known reality for people outside of the sector. WHWBSW has the capacity and a responsibility now to shed light on this systemic abuse and create real change before the cycle starts again – with primary prevention.



- + Our campaigns can be fun and meaningful, without being too prescriptive or alienating against minorities.
- + Our campaigns can be implicitly inclusive of women with disability.
- + Our campaigns can be explicitly about the substantial abuse and disadvantage experienced by women with disability.

- + We can pose questions about how our partners are tackling the systemic violence experienced by women with disability.
- + We can include women with disability in our research, on our panels and as our experts.

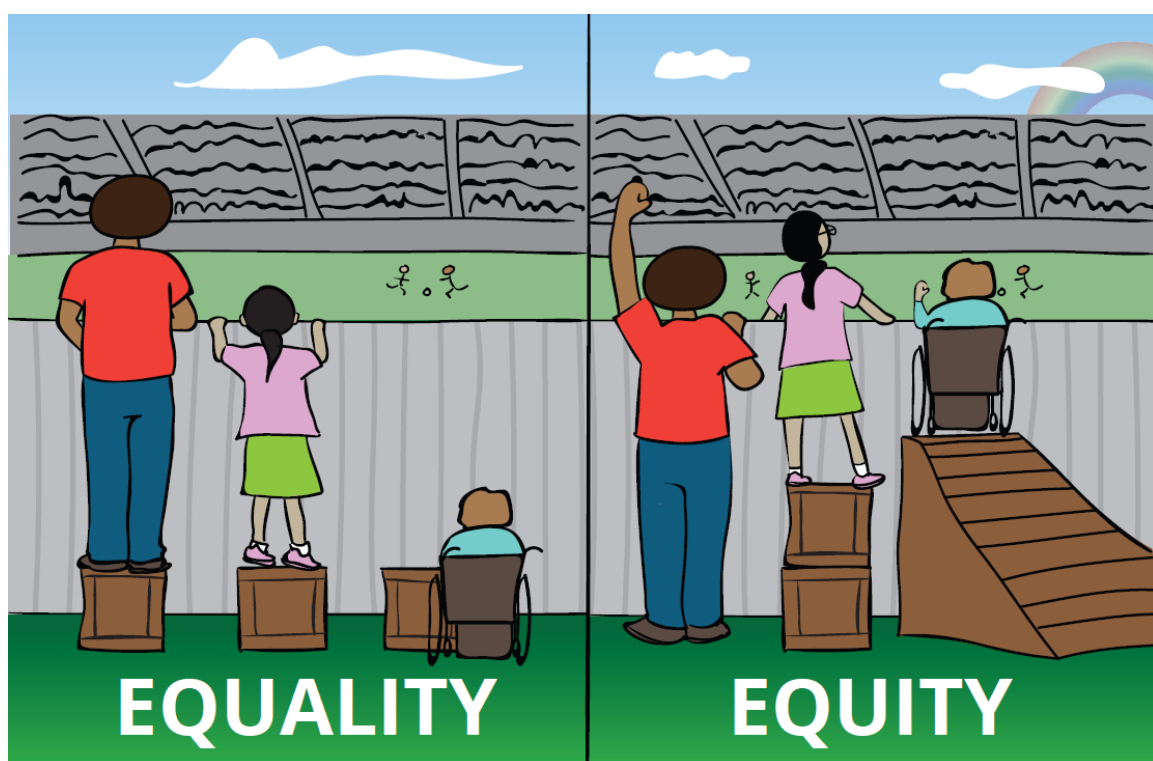
\*[https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/table-of-contents?utm\\_source=miragenews&utm\\_medium=miragenews&utm\\_campaign=news](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/table-of-contents?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news)



## Gender Equity

Women with disability are amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalised in the community. Our work in Gender Equity can help sculpt a better future for everyone, particularly for women and particularly for women with disability.

+ Our Unconscious Bias training can be used as a platform to share stories and normalise images of women with disability.



+ We can support initiatives that empower women with disability to find employment and encourage employers to value the working capacity of women with disabilities.

+ We can acknowledge the significant financial disadvantage of women with disability and the various ways these manifests in their lives.



## Sexual and Reproductive Health

Women with disability can be sexual beings and should have choice and control over their bodies. There is a common myth that women with physical disabilities *can't* be sexual and women with intellectual disabilities *shouldn't* be sexual. These are both wildly incorrect and extremely harmful.

As Women with Disabilities Victoria state on their website: *"We are mothers and carers, actively sexual and celibate, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and heterosexual."*

- + In our work we acknowledge the diversity of sexuality within the diversity of disability.
- + We can consider the additional needs of women with disability when organising events and relaying information. *Is this condom vending machine accessible if I am in a wheelchair or a woman of short stature? Have I provided this information in accessible formats like Easy English or a text only document?*
- + We can recognise the history of systemic abuse experienced by women with disability with regards to their sexual and reproductive health.
- + We can remember that this abuse isn't just in the past, it still happens today. In fact forced sterilisation is still legal in Australia and a reality for many young women with intellectual disability and complex behaviours. "Forced sterilisation of people with disability, particularly women and girls with disability, and people with intersex variations, is an ongoing practice that remains legal and sanctioned by Governments in Australia." – <http://dpoa.org.au/factsheet-sterilisation/>





## CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES AND SHAPING THE NARRATIVE

So often women with disability are seen as two very binary options.



A) An object of pity; of someone who contributes nothing to society.

OR

B) An object of inspiration. That despite “suffering” disability they can achieve great things.



These are harmful and misleading stereotypes that further impede on inclusion. Both these binaries set about to make people *without* disability feel better about themselves at the very detriment of people *with* disability.

Audiences can see these stories and think; *“How sad that’s no way to live. I’d rather be dead. At least I am not that person.”* OR *“If this person can climb a mountain despite being wheelchair bound, I should stop complaining and get on with my life.”*

One statement may seem harsher than the other but they are both equally harmful.

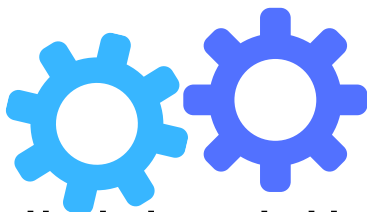


The second option, of *supposed* inspiration, may seem like a celebration but the distinction between inspiration porn and a genuine interest story about a woman who happens to have disability is very, very different.

To help negate the promotion of inspiration porn we can be mindful of its existence. We can approach stories with a discerning eye and watch out for the indicative tropes like “Wheelchair bound” and “suffers from Autism”.

Furthermore, with our work particularly our Training Modules and our Social Media platforms we can help shape a more truthful narrative about women and disability.

We can show that women with disability exist in our community, that they are diverse and that they are worthy of the same opportunities and access as everyone else.



For a more detailed description of Inspiration Porn and the Australian woman who fleshed out what that means; the iconic Stella Young, please refer to the Accessible and Inclusive: Hosting and Posting resource.

## ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE: HOSTING AND POSTING



### POSTING: THE NARRATIVE

+ Similar to the harmful reinforcement of gender stereotypes it is very important with regards to disability that as an organisation, particularly in our online presence, **we are not propping up reductive tropes** or supporting an ableist thirst for what is known as Inspiration Porn.

#### WHAT IS INSPIRATION PORN?

"And in the past few years, we've been able to propagate this lie even further via social media. You may have seen images like this one: 'The only disability in life is a bad attitude.' Or this one: 'Your excuse is invalid.' Indeed. Or this one: 'Before you quit, try!' These are just a couple of examples, but there are a lot of these images out there. You know, you might have seen the one, the little girl with no hands drawing a picture with a pencil held in her mouth. You might have seen a child running on carbon fiber prosthetic legs. And these images, there are lots of them out there, they are what we call inspiration porn. (Laughter) And I use the term porn deliberately, because they objectify one group of people for the benefit of another group of people. So in this case, we're objectifying disabled people for the benefit of nondisabled people. The purpose of these images is to inspire you, to motivate you, so that we can look at them and think, 'Well, however bad my life is, it could be worse. I could be that person.' But what if you are that person?"  
— Stella Young



Stella Young

+ Thinking about the types of articles we might share or repost on social media or use as examples in our work and presentations is extremely important to the type of organisation we are and the change we wish to create in our community. Just don't include something because it seems to fit or looks cool; scrutinise it and consider it from multiple angles. **Why am I posting this and how does it further our key priority areas?**

+ It's a good practice to **double-check your sources** too. Whether it is a social media post or an official organisational position statement we need to ensure we are sharing the correct information from the correct places. We need to be true and factual to make an impact on any level.



## ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

At WHWBSW no one is expected to be the all-knowing keeper of disability information. That's simply impossible! What we do hope the HWA project has instilled in the organisation and its staff though is; the courage and permission to ask questions. Its ok to not know! But if it can directly affect someone in your group or in your organisation and you can learn more and you can do something about it, you definitely should.

As discussed throughout the Hosting and Posting Companion Guide; inclusion and access are imperative to the health and wellbeing of women with disability so every effort you make to act inclusively will be valued in some way. Even if you don't get a thank you or a round of applause acting towards inclusion means that you are setting a precedent and a new standard – and that's a wonderful thing!

So use the Checklist and Companion Guide created especially for WHWBSW when you are planning an event or creating resources.

### ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE: HOSTING AND POSTING



As an organisation we aim to be inclusive and accessible.  
That means we must be prepared to adapt to new information and new processes as the more marginalised voices come to the fore in our community.

As you are Hosting and Posting on behalf of WHWBSW always listen, observe and stay curious about Intersectionality.

Remember this resource is not your comprehensive list to accessibility it is, however, your catalyst for inclusion.



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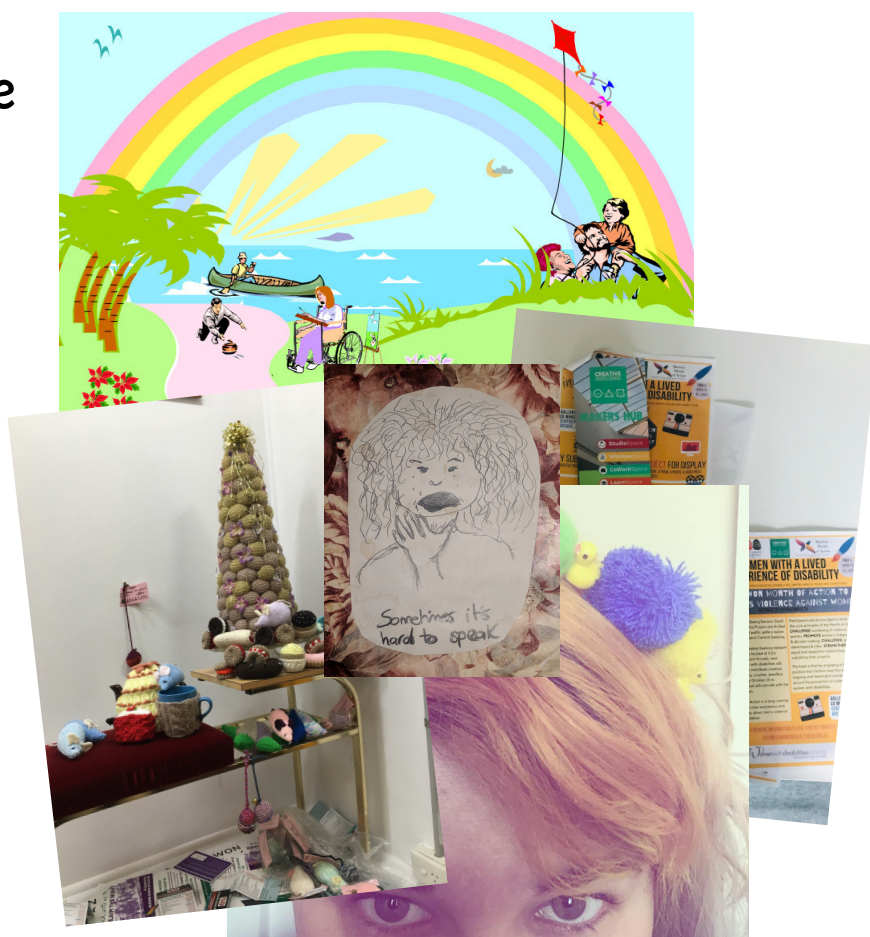


## CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Getting people involved in prevention work can be tricky. However, our training modules and poster projects are fantastic examples of how different methods can work to bring new people on the women's health journey with us.

For women with disability who face low employment numbers and that can sometimes be marginalised in “special schools” or programs it can be even trickier to reach individuals and share our messages. Recognising these issues the HWA project got creative and got two creative community engagement projects up and happening in 2018.

**The Creative Gallery Space for the Barwon Month of Action** was a great way to get women with disability involved in the prevention campaign in a gentle but impactful way. Women could supply creative projects (painting, crochet, sculpture) in the way that was most convenient to them.





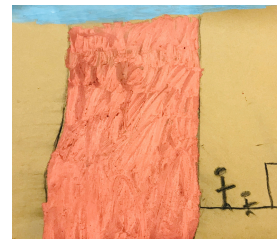
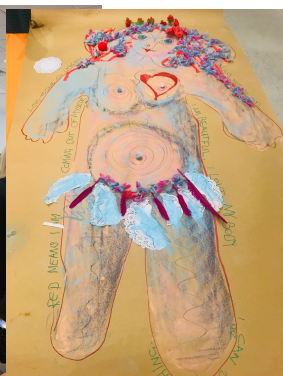


Some contributors brought their pieces to the space and socialised with the Creative Geelong crew and others emailed their work for us to print and display. Discussions were raised, connections were made and there was so much excitement and pride.

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## Art Medicine Workshops

Teaming up with Art Medicine Facilitator Ingrid Petterson the HWA Project organised two workshops for women with disability to engage in creative exploration and a celebration of women. This was done at the City of Greater Geelong's Renew Project Space for International Day of People with Disability on December 3.





## SHOWING UP FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITY

Working from within WHWBSW the Community Engagement Officer could explicitly prompt HPOs and other staff to consider their work from the perspective and for the benefit of women disability.

Now the onus is on the organisation and its staff to uphold these potential perspectives. You will see in the newly developed Project Planning Template a section on Intersectionality. Use it! Don't just cross it off the list. Truly consider how your project can translate with a disability lens.

Remember women with disability and how systemic disadvantage affects them within our key priority areas.

Challenge stereotypes and help showcase narratives that reflect more than just two sides to living with disability.

Consider the needs of disabled women when organising events and creating material.

Think outside the box, get creative with your engagement.

Be an ally, show up for women with disability and help improve health and wellbeing for women in the Barwon South West community.

