"Your Say, Your Rights"

A Project about Women with Disabilities using Technology and the Internet   (Plain English Summary)

WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

This report is about the *Your Say, Your Rights* Project. The project was about women with disabilities using technology and the internet. Some of the ways women with disabilities do this include using:

- Computers

- ipads and mobile phones

- Facebook

- Email and Skype

- Websites

- Programs such as Word, or PowerPoint

WHY IS THE PROJECT IMPORTANT?

The project was about women with disabilities using technology and the internet. It is important that women with disabilities are able to get and use technology and the internet so they can learn new things, have their say, meet and talk to different people and groups find information and speak up for their rights.

WHO RAN THE PROJECT?

The "*Your Say, Your Rights"* Project was run by the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) and Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV).

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PROJECT?

1. We ran technology and internet workshops for women who are members of the following self advocacy groups:

- Reinforce

- Brain Injury Matters

- New Wave

- Speaking Up for Yourselves

- Learning and Participation Group

Some of the things the women talked about in the workshops included:

- Facebook – Is it for me?

- Is using the internet safe?

- How can technology help self advocates?

- About the ipad

2. We met with women members of the Victorian Deafblind Advocacy Group to talk about the problems they have using technology and the internet.

3. The project worker Chris Jennings read reports and looked on the internet to find information about women with disabilities using technology and the internet and the problems they face.

4. Chris wrote a report about all the things we had learnt about women with disabilities using technology and the internet and how we can make things better.
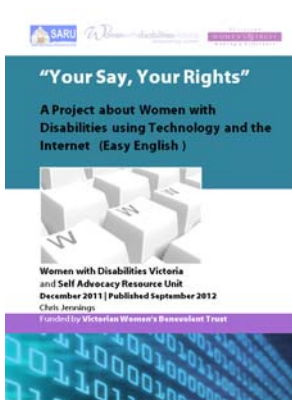
WHY IS IT GOOD FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES TO USE TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET?

- Technology and the internet support women with disabilities to get information, learn new things, have their say, communicate with other people and network.

- Women with disabilities who are not able to get out in the community can use technology and the internet to talk to other people and share information. This means they are not so alone.

- Some women say that their social life is better when they can use the internet.

- The internet is a great place to learn about your rights and meet other people who are fighting for their rights.

- The internet helps women have their say to government, service providers and the community.

- It is really important that women with disabilities are able to use the internet because a lot of information they may need can only be found on the internet.
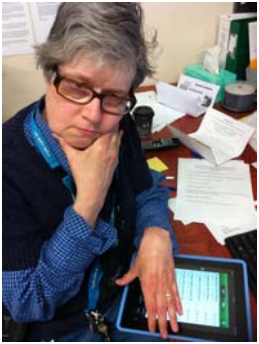
One woman in *the Your Say, Your Rights* Project said her life got lots better and her world got bigger when she got a computer and the internet at home.

WHY DO SOME WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES NOT USE TECHNOLOGY OR THE INTERNET?

Many women with disabilities do not use technology or the internet because:

- They do not have enough money to buy computers, ipads or pay for the internet because it all costs too much.

- They think the internet is not safe.

- They do not get the support they need to learn how to use computers or the internet.

- It is too hard to get to different places that may have computers or the internet.

- It is hard to get support to help with using technology e.g. how to set up your mobile phone, what equipment you need to buy, understanding internet plans etc.

- They are not able to read so they need computers that read out the information or use braille printers.

Women who took part in *Your Say, Your Rights* Project said that sometimes they have to cut off their internet so they can pay for their mobile phone because they cannot afford both.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM IF YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO USE TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET?

If you are not able to access or use technology or the internet you can miss out on:

- Getting important information that is only on the internet.

- Learning new things.

- Meeting and talking to other people and groups on the internet.

- Using email which is an important way that lots of people and services communicate with each other.

When people miss out on information and connecting with people because they do not have technology or the internet this is called the "Digital Divide".

The Digital Divide means that people who **do use** technology are able to share more information, learn more things, and connect with more new people around the world than people who **do not use** technology and the internet.

This means that people who do not use technology and the internet can miss out on lots of important things.

Members of the Victorian Deafblind Advocacy Group said they are very isolated and they need to have better access to technology and the internet so they can communicate with each other, have their say and also have input into government, services, community and decision making.

WHAT THINGS NEED TO CHANGE?

It is really important that women with disabilities have the chance to use technology and the internet. The things that need to be done to make this happen include:
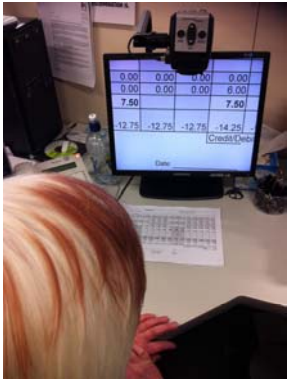
- Making sure that technology and the internet are accessible for people with disabilities. This means that they are set up in a way that makes it easy for people with disabilities to use them.
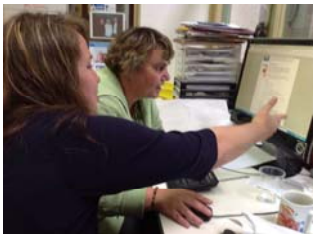
- Providing training for women with disabilities so they can learn how to use technology and the internet. It is important that the training does not cost too much or is free.
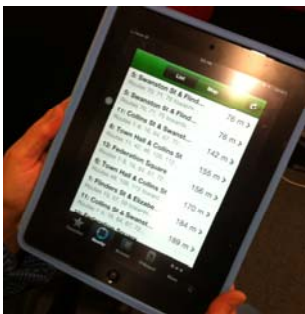
- Providing women with disabilities with the chance to speak up about their support needs and the things that worry them about using technology and the internet.

- Providing women with disabilities with the support they need to set up and use computers, ipads, mobile phones and the internet.

One woman in the *Your Say, Your Rights* Project said her doctor said it would be a good idea to learn to use the internet to help her not feel so sad and alone.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE THINGS BETTER?

It is a human right to have access to technology and the internet. The *Your Say, Your Rights* Project has found many women with disabilities are not getting this right. It is very important that all women with disabilities get the chance to use technology and the internet. Some of the things we can do to make this happen include:

- Telling the government and service providers why it is important for women with disabilities to have access to technology and the internet.

- Asking the government and service providers to plan and give money to make sure women with disabilities are able to use technology and the internet.

- Making sure women get a chance to speak up about what they need to be able to use technology and the internet.

- Getting funding to help you run a workshop about how to use the internet and technology and how to stay safe.

- Talking to your local politician about the rights of women with disabilities to use the internet and technology and asking them what they can do to make this happen.

Many of the women in the *Your Say, Your Rights* Project said they do not know where to go or who to talk to get advice and information about technology and the internet.
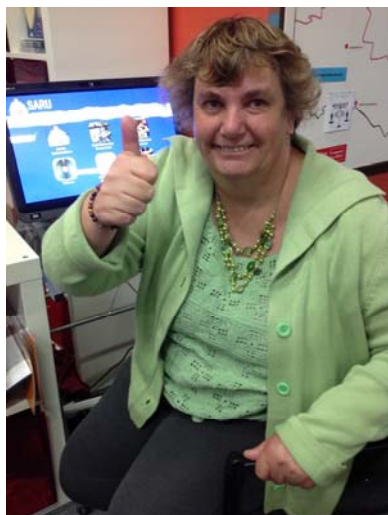
ONE LAST THING

This report says that it is important that women with disabilities have the same chance as anyone else in the community to enjoy all the good things that can happen when you use technology and the internet.

Women with disabilities have the right to be able to use technology and the internet so they can get information, meet and talk with other people, connect with services and government, learn new things, have fun, find out about services, have their say, and speak up for their rights.

Government, service providers, technology and internet companies and the community must work together to make sure this happens!

Women in the *Your Say, Your Rights* Project really wanted to learn more about using the internet to help them to speak up for their rights and get their voices heard.