



## **Submission to the ACT Budget Consultation 2026-27**

**19 December 2025**

## About WWDACT

Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation dedicated to advancing the rights, safety, and inclusion of women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people with disabilities in the ACT region. Established in 1995, WWDACT's work is underpinned by a human rights philosophy, aligning closely with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). WWDACT is unique in its intersectional approach to gender and disability advocacy, utilising co-design principles and lived experiences of members to influence policy and drive systemic change. As a Disabled People's Organisation, we are run by and for women and non-binary people with disabilities.

WWDACT comes together with other organisations representing Canberrans with Disabilities, including Advocacy for Inclusion and ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability, to create the ACT Disability Directed Consumer Advocacy Caucus. While we retain organisational distinctions, the caucus formalises our commitment to shared advocacy and representative work to the ACT Government on some key issues and matters of practice.

## **Our submission**

This submission builds on the joint budget submission made by the Disability Directed Advocacy Caucus consisting of Women with Disabilities, Advocacy for Inclusion, and ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability.

This submission outlines budget items specific to women, non-binary and gender diverse people (women\*) with disabilities in the ACT.

## **Violence prevention against women and non-binary people with disabilities**

As the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy continues in the development phase, it is imperative that funding is secured for new, evidence-based and intersectional actions that will address violence against women and non-binary people with disabilities.

Women with disabilities experience all types of violence at higher rates, with increased severity and for longer than other women, Violence against women with disabilities is more extensive and more diverse in nature than violence against women in general. The Disability Royal Commission found that women with disabilities are 40% more likely to experience of domestic violence than women without disabilities, and 90% of women with intellectual disabilities have been subjected to sexual abuse; 68% have been abused before they turn eighteen.

The newly designed DFSV strategy should take consideration of actions occurring in other disability strategies, and consider opportunities to strengthen existing programs that will have a positive impact in the ACT.

## **Our funding asks**

- Ongoing funding to deliver training for DFSV staff working with people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, to ensure continuity of the training program in a context of high staff turnover and limited resourcing (extension of Action 2.1 under the ACT Disability Strategy)
- Funding extended to all frontline crisis services to build disability understanding and responsiveness through Disability Access and Inclusion Plan development, including resourcing local

DPOs to assist in the consultation and development of these plans (extension of Action 2.2 under the ACT Disability Strategy)

- Funding for specific primary prevention programs under the new DFSV strategy that focus on intersecting drivers of violence (sexism and ableism)
- Funding for a Disability Liaison officer at all community legal practices, including Women's Legal Centre, to ensure full coverage in the Disability Justice Community of Practice
- Funding to build capacity of community sector to undertake primary prevention work, upskilling organisations to take on primary prevention initiatives, particularly for priority cohorts such as people with disabilities including intellectual disabilities
- Funding for disability specific community education on coercive control in alignment with the new Coercive Control legislative reforms
- Funding to support the implementation of the Criminalizing Coercive Control bill
- Funding for an accessibility audit of victim survivor services that are appropriate and accessible for women with disabilities

## Support for parents with disabilities

In the 2024 ACT Election WWDACT put forward a number of election asks to strengthen support for parents with disabilities. All people with disabilities have the right to parent under the CRPD and should have access to the supports they need for themselves and their children to thrive.

Reform in the children and families space has not always been inclusive or allowed an opportunity for the voices of people with disabilities or disability organisations to be heard.

### Our funding asks

- Funding for parenting supports, individual advocates and disability liaison;
  - disability violence training for Child and Young Person Support workers
  - a navigator position to support parents with disability.
- The Integrated Service Response Program should be enhanced for all parents with disabilities who are in a crisis situation

- Resourcing and consideration of disability organisations to respond to consultations such as the First 1000 Days Strategy consultations

## **Support for sexual and reproductive health of people with disabilities**

Although important work is being done under the Disability Health Strategy to identify gaps and scope sexual health services and education for women with disabilities over the age of 18, there is still work to be done to strengthen the reproductive rights of women and non-binary people with disabilities in the ACT.

### Our funding asks

- Calling an ACT Inquiry into forced sterilisation to surface, identify and prompt action on forced sterilisation in the ACT
- Programs to ensure all children with disabilities have access to meaningful, timely, affirmative sexual health and consent education
- Investigate a funding package for accessible and affordable assisted reproductive technology (ART) in the ACT.

## **Inclusion of women and non-binary people with disabilities in policy consultation processes**

WWDACT's Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) is a lived experience advisory group consisting of 6 women and non-binary people with disabilities. The PAC meets monthly with the WWDACT policy team to give advice and share their diverse range of lived experience related to WWDACT's current policy work. The PAC represents a broad range of women and non-binary people with disabilities, including from CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+, ageing and other communities. PAC members draw on their diverse range of experiences and accessibility barriers to provide advice and input on policy and advocacy work.

WWDACT started the PAC as we identified that policy consultations on healthcare, gendered violence prevention and disability supports are often inaccessible. These issues disproportionately impact women with disabilities. The PAC allows women with disabilities to be supported to participate in these consultations, both with materials and explanations, and through adequate compensation for their time.

The advocacy work of the PAC has been essential in representing the views of women with disabilities in ACT Government and other consultation processes. Over the past few years this has included the Disability Royal Commission, NDIS Review, Foundational Supports, Disability Strategy and Disability Health Strategy, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy, the Disability Inclusion Bill, a huge number of legislative assembly inquiries and community consultations, the International Day of People with Disabilities, and more. PAC members have informed advocacy around each of these policy areas and their input is reflected in WWDACT's policy work and submissions. In the current disability reform environment with a high community consultation load, it is pivotal that the voices of women with disabilities are represented and heard. The PAC represents an important opportunity to resource women with disabilities to provide their input into policy and program reforms that have a significant impact on their lives.

Over the three years the PAC has been running, PAC members have reported a huge increase in their confidence, professional and social development. Many have gone on to sit on other reference groups and committees, to speak at advocacy events, or to develop their own personal projects advocating for women and non-binary people with disabilities. This year the PAC was nominated for a Chief Minister's Inclusion Award, and two members of the PAC were nominated for their individual work in disability inclusion and advocacy. In 2023, PAC member Lauren Cannell was the winner of the 'Achievement in Inclusion' award.

The PAC was originally funded by an ACT Government grant and is now an unfunded project. However, it is a critical project in the current environment of disability reform, ensuring the voices of women with disabilities are heard in the context of ACT Government policy consultation and reform. The PAC's input allows WWDACT to remain

connected to our community and representative of their experiences and views, whilst remunerating community members for their expertise and experience.

The PAC aligns with the ACT Wellbeing Framework in the domains of Identity and Belonging, Access and Connectivity. PAC members participate in consultations directly impacting the domains of Health, Safety, Living Standards, Housing and home, social connection, and education and life-long learning. It is an essential program for ensuring women with disabilities in the ACT are decision makers on issues that impact them (Identity and Belonging – ACT Wellbeing Framework). As a human rights jurisdiction, the ACT Government should consider the funding of this program in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – particularly Article 6 (Women with disabilities), Article 9 (Accessibility), and Article 29 (Participation in political and public life). The program also aligns with the principles articulated in the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2034, particularly an *intersectional approach*, *systemic change*, and the principle of *'nothing about us without us'*.

### Our funding ask

- WWDACT are seeking \$32,000 over 2 years (\$16,000 per annum) to continue operating the PAC. \$15,000 would enable 6 PAC members to be remunerated for their time for 10 meetings in the calendar year. \$1,000 per year would cover consumables expenditure (e.g. meeting accessibility requirements, transportation if required).

### **Endorsements**

This submission is endorsed by the ACT Disability Directed Advocacy Caucus, including Advocacy for Inclusion and ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability.

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