

ACT Budget
2023-24 ACT Budget Consultation Team
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Advocacy for Inclusion – Submission to the 2023 – 24 ACT Budget Consultation Process

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight our priorities for the 2023/24 ACT Budget process.

About us

Advocacy for Inclusion incorporating People with Disabilities ACT¹ is an independent organisation delivering reputable national systemic advocacy informed by our experience in individual advocacy and community and government consultation. We provide dedicated individual and self-advocacy services, training, information and resources in the ACT.

As a Disabled People's Organisation, the majority of our organisation, including our Board of Management, staff and members, are people with disabilities. Advocacy for Inclusion speaks with the authority of lived experience. It is strongly committed to advancing opportunities for the insights, experiences and opinions of people with disabilities to be heard and acknowledged.

Advocacy for Inclusion operates under a human rights framework. We uphold the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strive to promote and advance the human rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in the community. Advocacy for Inclusion is a declared public authority under the Human Rights Act 2004.

Introduction

The coming Budget comes at an important time marked by high expectations for the delivery of several ACT Government strategies for people with disabilities in the Territory in a challenging context.

This context includes identified needs for improvements to health, justice and education, the ACT's housing crisis and high cost of living pressures, the realities of a city undergoing rapid change in its infrastructure planning and transport, the experience of services under strain, the ongoing consequences of COVID19 as well as consequential legislative change.

¹ On March 24, 2021, Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) officially merged with People with Disabilities ACT (PWDACT), a systemic advocacy organisation based in the ACT. Herein, reference to 'AFI' also acknowledges the values and philosophies of PWDACT.

In this submission we emphasise the need for investments to manage, deliver, monitor and evaluate ACT Government Strategies for people with disability including the ACT Disability Strategy and disability strategies in health, justice and education. We also urge investments which address gaps in disability support and lift universal design and accessibility in housing, transport and the urban realm.

We also call for packages to mitigate the continuing impacts of COVID and unintended consequences from legislation on Voluntary Assisted Dying. Finally, we seek funding to facilitate disability rights approaches to climate change and waste reduction as well as a transition of I-Day to community control in the ACT.

Shared priorities

The ACT disability rights community, represented by Disabled Peoples Organisations and Disability Representative Organisations, comes to this Budget with a set of broadly shared expectations for decision and delivery.

On 17 February 2023 AFI convened a meeting of organisations to discuss and confirm priorities and expectations for the ACT Budget. We affirmed the significance of strategies to lead disability policy in the ACT and ensuring they are supported by appropriate investments. The organisations highlighted the need for significant and ongoing investments to facilitate their delivery, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. We also noted the necessity for action and attention to the needs of people with disability in an expanding city. The groups emphasised the importance of investment in services, access, and inclusion initiatives to improve the well-being of people with disability, and they are outlining their shared priorities in their submissions to the current ACT Budget Community Consultation Process.

You can read the statement [here](#) and it also forms Attachment A to this submission.

AFI priorities

Aligned with and supporting the Shared Priorities, AFI offers the ACT Government and community a set of detailed recommended funding and investment packages and initiatives which deliver the intent of Government Strategies for people with disability including the ACT Disability Strategy, the ACT Disability Health Strategy, the Disability Justice Strategy and the ACT Inclusive Education Strategy.

This is an ambitious submission and that is warranted. It is a comprehensive set of measures and initiatives which matches the ambition of the stated reform agenda and the magnitude of the disadvantage, barriers, issues and opportunities which face us as we improve the wellbeing and circumstances of people with disability. Their scope is in line with the ACT's wellbeing indicators and our CRPD obligations as well as work needed to deliver on the ACT's Parliamentary and Governing Agreement in the remainder of the Parliamentary term.

They position universal design within rapid city change to housing, infrastructure and transport and respond to pressures from COVID, legislative change and climate adaption. We also emphasise the need for community control, oversight and monitoring as well as proper funding for the sector and to address gaps in disability support.

Delivery of a complex reform agenda for disability requires continued advocacy across and *within* Government including policy capacity.

AFI supports a strong, integrated ACT Office for Disability to drive disability reform across the ACT Government and also to keep the Commonwealth and the National Disability Insurance Agency accountable and focused on the needs of people with disability in the ACT.

Turning to our specific priorities we invite consideration of the following initiatives and measures. [Attachment B](#) provides a measure-by-measure table which contains specific fundable measures and a more detailed rationale for each in turn.

A summary is below:

ACT Disability Strategy

- We recommend the Budget include a funding package to deliver, monitor and implement the ACT Disability Strategy – the ACT’s commitment to Australia’s Disability Strategy and to meet obligations under CRPD.
- Measures include funding for multi-tiered oversight work, to monitor and deliver the strategy and introduce signature measures under Strategy themes
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Human rights](#), [Employment](#), [Living standards](#), and [Sense of belonging and inclusion](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 3 – General Principles](#) and [Article 4 – General Obligations](#)

ACT Disability Health Strategy

- We recommend Budget include a funding package to deliver the promised ACT Disability Health Strategy including monitoring, implementation and practical work. The strategy was a commitment under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement
- Measures include a social model training package and delivery pilot; a training module on diagnostic overshadowing; a regime of extended annual health consultations for people with disability; wraparound diagnostic services; community health access grants; and hospital kit upgrades.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Overall health](#) and [Access to health services](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 25 – Health](#)

Disability support

- We recommend Budget include funding to maintain and deliver disability supports including NDIS gaps, mental health and transition supports for people in crisis.
- This includes continuing the CASP program and addressing mental health gaps plus post PACER support.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Human Rights](#), [Access to Services](#), and [Mental Health](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 25 - Health](#)

Justice and Human Rights

- We recommend Budget include funding measures to address the over-representation of people with disability in the ACT justice system including diversion from the prison and oversight of closed spaces
- Measures include implementation of the healthy prisons review of AMC, initiatives to address recidivism and focus on rehabilitation and to fund a proper OPCAT mechanism.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Access to justice and restorative practices](#) and [Human rights](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 13 – Access to Justice](#) and [Article 12 – Equal Recognition Before the Law](#)

Education

- We recommend Budget include a funding package to improve outcomes for students with disability, deliver the ACT Inclusive Education Strategy and improve universal design
- Measures include funding to implement the strategy and enable a full transition to inclusive education; funding for universal design of curricula and physical and digital spaces and an increase in the disability loading
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Equity of educational outcomes](#), [Learning for life](#), and [Student belonging](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 24 - Education](#)

Housing

- We recommend Budget include funding and measures to address the housing and homelessness crisis for people with disability including encouraging more accessible and affordable built form through well maintained public, private and community dwellings
- Measures include more public housing at the gold standard for access; growth in accessible non group housing controlled by the community sector; tax breaks and incentives for accessible market housing, growing accessible private rental, a package to encourage socially responsible sector wide leasehold application processes; a package to incentivise accessibility in medium density housing; and a devolution program from group housing.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Homelessness, Housing affordability and availability](#), [Housing suitability](#), and [Rental stress](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community](#) and [Article 28 – Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection](#)

Planning and transport

- Funding to build social planning capacity and responses and ensure planning, city infrastructure, community facilities and transport links meet the needs of older people and people and people with disabilities.
- Measures sought include funding to ensure the new planning system supports adequate planning for people with disability in new built infrastructure; accessibility audit and improvement work; accessibility grants, improvements to wheelchair taxis and taxi subsidies; delivery of a fully accessible bus network; plus funding to secure and sustain community transport.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Access to services](#), [Liveable city](#), and [Transport use and access](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 9 – Accessibility](#) and [Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community](#)

COVID disability response

- A funding package to mitigate the effects of COVID on people with disability and other vulnerable Canberrans. This should include funding for public health measures, service continuity, social inclusion and information to people with disabilities impacted by COVID19 and to implement recommendations from the Long COVID inquiry
- Measures include community development programs which address the social inclusion of people in situations of sustained isolation due to COVID; and funding to support people with long COVID with allied health, rehabilitation, peer support and advocacy.

- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Access to health services](#), [Community resilience to emergencies](#) and [Sense of belonging and inclusion](#) enables compliance with CRPD [Article 11 – Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies](#) and [Article 26 – Habilitation and Rehabilitation](#)

VAD response package

- A funding package to prevent unintended outcomes and respond to risks and support needs arising from the introduction of Voluntary Assisted Dying in the ACT.
- Measures include a suicide prevention project modelled on the [It Gets Better project](#); a support guarantee (with an attached funding pool) for people considering VAD to ensure no one is offered VAD due to a lack of disability, health or psychosocial supports; and additional advocacy support to address the effects of harmful commentary and hate speech.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Human rights](#) and [Feeling that voice and perspective matter](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 10 – Right to Life](#)

Dialogue on environment, climate change and disability rights

- An initiative to deliver a nationally significant dialogue between the disability rights and environmental justice sectors for an improved and better calibrated response to climate change for people with disability
- One off funding would support policy work, a dialogue and roundtable bringing together the climate change and disability rights communities to frame and disseminate a set of principles to guide disability friendly climate responses and inform work to mitigate the impacts of climate change *on* people with disability
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Climate resilient environment and community](#) and [Healthy and resilient natural environment](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 5 – Equality and Non-Discrimination](#) and [Article 11 – Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies](#)

IDPWD - transition to community control

- Funding to improve, modernise and embed community control in ACT celebrations of the UN International Day of People with Disability
- Funding would support a community secretariate and work to develop and implement community-controlled celebrations and events of significance.
- This supports delivery of outcomes under Wellbeing Indicator [Sense of belonging and inclusion](#) and [Participation in community events and activities](#) and enables compliance with CRPD [Article 8 – Awareness-raising](#)

More detail on these measures is in the table attached separately to this letter at [Attachment B](#). Advocacy for Inclusion looks forward to the coming Budget and welcomes the opportunity to discuss these priorities with your team and ACT Government Directorates. This is a public submission.

To discuss this submission please contact Nicolas Lawler, CEO on 0439 431 814 or Craig Wallace Head of Policy on 0408 135 796.