



People with Disabilities ACT
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Australian Capital Territory
Budget Consultation 2019/2020
ACT Chief Minister
Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
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SUBMISSION FROM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ACT (PWDACT) AS PART OF THE ACT PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2020-21

Dear ACT Chief Minister

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the ACT budget consultation process for the 2020-21 Territory Budget and help the ACT Government in its continuing requirement to understand and meet the needs of people with disabilities in the territory.

At least one in five Canberrans has reported as having physical and mental disabilities, notwithstanding that the incident of depression and anxiety raises this even higher – a significant potential voting bloc in any election.

PWDACT was established in 1981. For nearly 40 years, we have become established as the peak disability organisation for people with disabilities in Canberra, run by people with disabilities and also representing other organisations and bodies which themselves have disabled or disadvantaged cohorts.

Our funding base has not grown for 10 years. We are currently reducing our staffing yet we continue to be asked for our input and policy advice on major reforms, programs and issues that affect people with disabilities in Canberra.

We are the 'go-to' organisation in Canberra for input to major city issues representing the needs of some 65,000 Canberrans with a disability. We comment on matters including housing, transport, infrastructure, community resources such as public libraries and parks, as well education, health and other community resources and public facilities. As well, we are asked to have input on behalf of Canberrans on the NDIS, the Royal Commission into Abuse, Violence and Neglect of People with Disabilities.

Most recently we have been honoured by the Governor General to become our Patron. This will be formally announced in coming weeks around the International Day of People with Disabilities. This



new patronage is testament to the depth and breadth of PWDACT's advocacy work that we seek to uphold for Canberrans with a disability, both now and into the future.

PWDACT is in much needed support from the ACT Government so we can continue our work in supporting our members and the government itself. The people we represent comprise vulnerable and low-income people, and we will never be a paid-membership organisation.

We cannot rely on Federal funding such as ILC grants, as these are not to be used on staffing, advocacy or core office sustainment. And the shift in funding arrangements to the NDIS means systemic advocacy is falling into a gap. The NDIS does not cover systemic advocacy. Therefore, without the ACT Government's support, PWDACT would not be able to continue its essential advocacy work.

In Canberra, 65,000 people have some form of disability with a significant yet underrepresented voice. PWDACT are a unified voice covering all aspects of disabilities in Canberra. This budget submission includes a proposal to set the core funding base of PWDACT to a minimum level of \$210,754 per annum to ensure that we are able to remain a key partner to Government.

I thank you for your consideration of our submission.

We would be happy to discuss this or answer any questions. Please feel free to contact me on (02) 6286 4223.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Rachel".

Rachel Sirr

Executive Officer
People with Disabilities ACT
31 October 2019

SUBMISSION FROM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO INPUT INTO THE ACT TERRITORY PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2020-21

RECOMMENDATION

That ACT Government invest in recurrent funding for PWDACT for the period of its next service agreement, commencing 2020-21 to the value of \$210,754 (indexed)

INTRODUCTION

As part of its budget consultation process, the ACT Government has requested advice on what services are most important for the ACT, how the government can deliver services more efficiently, what should government stop doing and what are the new ideas that government should consider when constructing next year's territory budget.

People with Disabilities ACT (PWDACT) advocates that a core responsibility of Government is to ensure that services are provided to all citizens of the ACT in a way that is equitable and promotes the ability of all people to reach their potential.

PWDACT commends the ACT Government on its stated commitments to make Canberra an inclusive community. Our submission seeks financial investment to ensure that:

- people with disabilities in Canberra can connect and share their individual experiences;
- people with disabilities can amplify their voices to improve the decisions of Government.

PART ONE: A FUNDING PROPOSAL TO ENSURE THE VOICES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE CONSIDERED AS PART OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE ACT'S POLICIES AND PLANNING PROCESSES

PWDACT was established in 1981. For nearly 40 years, we have become established as the peak disability organisation for people with disabilities in Canberra, run by people with disabilities and also representing other organisations and bodies which themselves have disabled or disadvantaged cohorts.

We are seen as representing the needs of some 65,000 Canberrans with a disability – covering all disabilities. Moreover, our individual membership base includes up to 30 specific local peak organisations which allows us to have a wide overview of common emerging issues and problems.

At least one in five Canberrans has reported as having physical and mental disabilities, notwithstanding that the incident of depression and anxiety raises this even higher – a significant potential voting bloc in any election.

Our funding base has not grown for 10 years. We are currently reducing our staffing yet we continue to be asked for our input and policy advice on major reforms, programs and issues that affect people with disabilities in Canberra.

Moreover, we are frequently contacted by ACT Government directorates, as well as Canberra media to comment on issues of public importance on behalf of people with disabilities.



The disability sector presently faces challenges due to the implementation of the NDIS and broader policy reform on which we are frequently called to contribute.

We wish to continue and sustain our advocacy work. We require funding to ensure we are not restricted in our ability to represent the interests of people with disability.

THE NDIS DOES NOT FUND ADVOCACY

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) aims to provide a service support system for many people with disabilities. The NDIS does not, however provide for systemic advocacy or work. **We do not want to see Canberra go backwards when it comes to inclusion of people with disabilities.**

As the NDIS has rolled out, many people with disabilities who were previously engaged in advocacy now have to spend their energy ensuring that they have vital individual services and supports.

FEDERAL FUNDING / ILC GRANTS ARE NOT FOR ADVOCACY

On several occasions the ACT Government have asked us about our Federal funding however the Federal (Information Linkages and Community grant) funding that is available covers specific community programs; we gladly participate and apply for these.

However, ILC funding is not to be used for staffing of our core organisations nor for systemic advocacy. We therefore are in need of the ACT Government's ongoing commitment, funding and support for Canberrans with a disability.

ACT GOVERNMENT - CORE FUNDING PURPOSE

Organisations that have placed people with disabilities at the centre of their organisations have always operated on very minimal funding. The changed environment and the increased resources required to effectively maintain community organisations means that this is creating more pressure.

Canberrans with disabilities have a right and need for an independent advocacy organisation that will represent them in as many areas as possible. Moreover, we as an organisation want to flourish and improve standards of living and rights for people with a disability. Not only so Canberra does not go backward, but so we can move forward.

PWDACT will have to fold if the ACT Government does not fund us adequately. We will be unable to sustain our work, nor apply for any program grants. We will not be able to speak up for people with disabilities in Canberra, which is a grave travesty.

This is why we need the ACT Government to step up with support of PWDACT, established in 1982, so that we do not have to fold. Summary of costs are outlined below.

Staff costs

We are seeking funding to support our organisational staffing structure and adequate investment in our infrastructure. We propose that core funding is set at \$210,754 per annum (indexed) for the period of the next service agreement.

This funding supports a staffing structure with two part time staff

- Executive Director \$84,360 FTE, plus Super – 30 hours per week
- Senior Policy Officer \$77,500 FTE, plus Super – 20 hours per week

Executive Director (81.6% FTE - **\$68,838**)

Senior Policy Officer (54.4% FTE - **\$42,160**)

Calculated at a FTE of ordinary weekly hours of 36.75 hours per week, plus ATO provisions, Leave Loading, Long Service Leave and Super provisions of an additional approximation of **\$30,000**. We are undergoing a significant restructure and downsizing of staff in 2019. This amount reflects after the downsizing.

Staff Subtotal: \$140,998

2. Operating costs

We request funding of **\$34,357** for PWDACT's office running costs. This operating budget covers financial auditing and accounting, AGM and associated logistics around Committee, insurance, telephone, internet and IT infrastructure, software such as Xero, design and office software, Shout membership and other membership fees, office rental, meeting logistics and room hire fees, post, stationery, printing.

3. Project and Engagement support

We are consistently asked for commentary, input, participation, and to advise and give input to local public engagement and the Canberra Media for all ACT Government portfolio areas. While this is excellent – we are confident that the community is reaching out, the high volume of requests and our small staff team creates challenges. Areas we are asked for commentary and input on include but are not limited to:

- Housing
- Health
- Land and planning infrastructure
- Transport
- Education
- Community infrastructure
- Advocacy on issues of national significance such as
 - Royal Commission into abuse neglect and violence against people with disabilities
 - NDIS reforms
 - Disability Support Pension

Throughout the year we will task consultants and agencies on an as-needs basis for support to fulfil demand for advice. This would include data analysis and reporting, design and content development, member research and outreach.

Project and Engagement support subtotal: \$35,400

Proposed Funding structure for the next service agreement

Year	FY20-21
Staff Costs	\$140,998
Operational Costs	\$34,357
Project and Engagement Support	\$35,400
TOTAL	\$210,754

Summary of the proposal

Approve the core funding of PWDACT to the value of \$210,754 over the period of the next service agreement to commence 2020/2021.

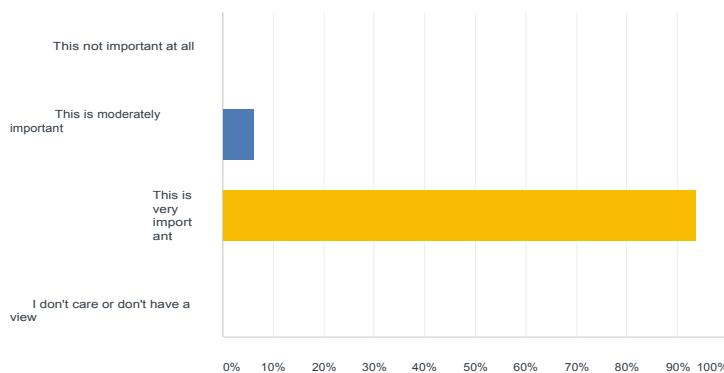
PART TWO: Further information to support this funding submission

We have strong support of the public and our members. PWDACT has undertaken an organisational reflection in 2019, supported by an independent consultant. The reflection interviewed members both face to face and via a survey. The results showed that there was strong support for PWDACT to remain both independent, and be funded to remain for the future.

Members of PWDACT articulate a strong commitment to PWDACT continuing as an independent, membership based DPO governed by people with a disability.

Figure Three: Survey Question on PWDACT's status as a DPO

Q10 How important do you consider it is that PWDACT is a Disabled People's Organisation that is governed by people with a disability



Respondents also expressed a strong view that it was important that PWDACT remains an independent community organisation.

Figure Five: Survey question regarding PWDACT's status as an independent organisation

Q12 How important do you think that it is that PWDACT continues to operate as an independent community organisation?

