

Innovative Housing Opportunities & Supported Living Opportunities

1. INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is a precondition for women and men with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. Without access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication - including information and communication technologies and systems - and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, people with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in society.ⁱ

Nationally, the majority of people with disabilities live in private dwellings (94%). The remainder of people with disabilities (6%) live in non-private dwellings, with nearly two-thirds of these (4%) living in cared accommodation. However, there is no publically available data that helps us understand the situation of women and men with disabilities in the ACT.ⁱⁱ

Strategies to create housing opportunities for women and men with disabilities in the ACT must be effective both at the community level and also at an individual level. At international law, this is the difference between the principle of accessibility and the principle of reasonable accommodation (respectively).ⁱⁱⁱ Care must be taken not to confuse or conflate these two principles.

It is very important that the specific needs of women with disabilities (i) for safety and protection against violence; (ii) for recognition of their family responsibilities as parents and carers; and (iii) as they age to be expressly embedded in each and every housing option under consideration.

2. ROLE OF THE A.C.T. GOVERNMENT

- Remove barriers to housing opportunities for people with disabilities in a continuous and systematic way, gradually yet steadily
- Promulgate appropriate innovative housing standards
- Provide a community approach to housing options which integrates access to transport, services and facilities such as schools, parks and hospitals;
- Support women and men with disabilities to make decisions about their accommodation options which respect the rights, will and preferences of each person



individually;

- Develop effective monitoring frameworks and efficient monitoring bodies with adequate capacity and appropriate mandates to make sure that plans, strategies and standards are implemented and enforced.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Action 1 – Accommodation Futures Planning Sessions

- WWDACT would like to hear about the steps the ACT government is taking to remove barriers to access to accommodation for women and men with disabilities in the public and private housing markets.
- WWDACT would like to learn of the town planning process the ACT Government will adopt to integrate essential and complex community infrastructure and services – for example: transport; childcare; schools; hospitals; shops; libraries; information and communication technologies; leisure; aged care services – with innovative housing opportunities for women and men with disabilities.
- WWDACT would like to be informed about plans by the ACT Government to co-ordinate emergency accommodation services (including disaster planning) and crisis services (including domestic violence) into its accommodation strategies so that women with disabilities escaping dangerous situations will be safe.

Action 2 – Establishment of an Innovative Housing Unit.

WWDACT believes it will be essential for an Innovative Housing Unit to

- Directly involve women with disabilities and their representative organisations in the processes of an Innovative Housing Unit
- Train all stakeholders in the appropriate ways to implement standards of innovative housing design as it is often insufficient awareness and lack of technical know-how on the part of people who design and produce housing options that creates problems
- Develop effective monitoring frameworks to make sure that innovative housing plans, strategies and standards are implemented on an on-going basis.

Action 3 – Accommodation Website

The accommodation website must meet the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities.

- Any online facility set up should follow best practice in Web Accessibility, and exceed the scheduled accessibility requirements in the Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy for adoption and implementation of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) as stipulated by the Australian Government Information Management Organisation.
- Any website designed for women and men with a disability must have an appealing look and feel so that women and girls are encouraged to visit the website. The



following resources provided by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) give some useful guidance:

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/managing.html> and <http://www.w3.org/WAI/managing.html>

- WWDACT is concerned to ensure policies and procedures for the accommodation website protect women and girls from any possible harm by electronic stalking and/or electronic harassment.
- Resources listed on the website must include gender-specific accommodation options such as women's refuges; women's networks; and the list of female resource officers.



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ⁱ General comment No, 2 (2014) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "Article 9: Accessibility"
UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/2 at para 1

ⁱⁱ Della Torre, E. Fact Sheet Women With Disabilities in the ACT (April 2014) at page 2

ⁱⁱⁱ General comment No, 2 (2014) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "Article 9: Accessibility"
UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/2 at paras 25, 26

