



Women With Disabilities ACT

Submission to the

ACT Budget Consultation 2023-24

18 April 2023

Women With Disabilities ACT acknowledges and pays respect to the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, the traditional custodians of the ACT Region, on whose land our office is located. We pay our respects their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their spiritual, social, historical, and ongoing connection to these lands and the contribution they make to the life of the Australian Capital Territory. Sovereignty was never ceded.

About WWDACT

Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation for women, girls, feminine identifying, and non-binary people with disability in the ACT region. Established in 1995, WWDACT follows a human rights philosophy, based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of (All Forms Of) Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It works with government and non-government organisations to improve the status and lives of women* with disabilities in the ACT and surrounding region. Our priority areas include violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and healthcare.

WWDACT is a Disabled People's Organisation, governed by women, feminine identifying, and non-binary people with disabilities. WWDACT acknowledges the assistance of the ACT Government under the Office for Disability in making it possible to undertake our work.

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Notes on language used

WWDACT uses the term women* throughout this submission to denote women, girls, feminine-identifying, non-binary people, or anyone who has experienced or is currently experiencing gendered oppression.

This submission is endorsed by:

ACT Council of Social Service



Women's Health Matters

women's
health
matters!

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight our priorities for the 2023-24 ACT Budget through this consultation process.

WWDACT has identified several key investment needs in our priority areas of violence prevention, healthcare and co-design and inclusion. Our recommendations are based on extensive consultation with our membership and with the WWDACT Policy Advisory Committee.

As key priorities, we call for additional investments in violence prevention, as well as ensuring continued accessibility of support services by funding Disability Inclusion Advocates in violence crisis services.

We also call for improvements to healthcare including funding a Disability Liaison Officer in Canberra Health Services, and urge the government to address the gap in low-cost Artificial Reproductive Technology services in the ACT.

Finally, we join other disability organisations in calling for continued and increased investment in development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of disability strategies.

WWDACT notes the ACT Government's commitment to wellbeing in developing the 2023-24 Budget. We have demonstrated how each of our recommendations will improve the wellbeing of women* and people with disabilities in the ACT. We have also particularly highlighted the obligations of the ACT as a Human Rights Jurisdiction; to uphold the human rights of people with disability through compliance with the [Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), and the rights of women* through the [Convention on the Elimination of \(All Forms Of\) Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#).

Shared budget 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 10 March 2023 WWDACT and other ACT DPOs and DROs outlined our shared priorities for this budget consultation. We affirmed the significance of strategies to lead disability policy in the ACT, and highlighted the need for significant and ongoing investments to facilitate their delivery, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. We also noted the importance of investment in services, access, and inclusion initiatives to improve the wellbeing of people with disability.

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

WWDACT key priorities

In addition to the shared priorities, WWDACT calls for additional funding to be invested into violence prevention, healthcare, and disability rights in the ACT. Our key priorities are detailed below, with additional priorities (drawn from previous consultations with ACT Government and our membership) included in Attachment B.

Funding for prevention of gendered violence

We call for funding for an increased commitment to the prevention of gendered violence. This includes greater collaborations between directorates on existing policy and programs that aim to end violence, and more detailed reporting and accountability across the whole of government. This will allow ACT to meet its obligations under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2022-2032*, ensuring that the ACT does all that it can to progress its goal of ending gendered violence within a generation¹.

Since 2017, the ACT has not had its own violence prevention strategy, with funding not renewed after the *2011-2017 ACT Prevention of*

¹ Department of Social Services (2022). *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. Available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2022/national_plan_to_end_violence_against_women_and_children_2022-2032.pdf

*Violence Against Women and Children Strategy*². Current approaches, including reporting under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* and the Safer Families Levy, lack transparency and detail. It is especially unclear whether or how these current approaches meet the needs of intersectional groups. For example, women* with disabilities experience both unique forms of violence and barriers in accessing pathways to safety; they need targeted violence prevention interventions to address these additional barriers and risks³.

We note that the ACT Government has committed \$933,000 over four years to design and implement a 10-year strategy for the prevention of sexual violence⁴, and we hope to see this detailed in the 2023-24 budget. However, it is important that additional funding is directed to address all other forms of gendered violence. The ACT Government must ensure that violence prevention work has an intersectional focus, and is co-designed in consultation with specific intersectional groups such as women* with disabilities.

This will represent progress in the wellbeing indicators [Feeling that voice and perspective matter](#), [Human rights](#), [Domestic and family violence](#), [Feeling safe](#), [Victims of Crime](#). It will enable compliance with CRPD [Article 6 \(Women with disabilities\)](#), [Article 13 \(Access to justice\)](#) and [Article 16 \(Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse\)](#). It is essential for compliance with the [CEDAW](#).

² YWCA Canberra (2019). *2020-2021 ACT Government Budget Consultation Submission*. Available at <https://ywca-canberra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ACT-Budget-2020-2021-submission.pdf>

³ WWDACT. *Position Statement 1: Prevention of Violence against Women* with Disabilities*. Available at <https://d35ohva3c1yycw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/09121529/WWDACT-Position-Statement-One-Prevention-of-Violence.pdf>

⁴ ACT Government (2022). *Government Response to the Listen. Take Action to Prevent, Listen and Heal Report*. Available at https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2015869/Government-Response-to-the-Listen.-Take-Action-to-Prevent-Believe-and-Heal-Report.DOC.pdf

Funding for Disability Inclusion Advocates at violence crisis services

We call for increased funding for violence crisis services to enable them to continue to employ Disability Inclusion Advocates. Domestic Violence Crisis Service has received funding to employ one Disability Inclusion Advocate for the last year – who has been instrumental in ensuring women* with disabilities experiencing violence can access these services safely. It is imperative that this funding is made ongoing, to ensure crisis services remain accessible and disability-informed.

This will represent progress in the wellbeing indicators [Access to Services](#), [Human rights](#), [Domestic and family violence](#), [Feeling safe](#), [Victims of Crime](#). It will enable compliance with CRPD [Article 6 \(Women with disabilities\)](#), [Article 9 \(Accessibility\)](#), [Article 13 \(Access to justice\)](#), [Article 16 \(Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse\)](#) and [Article 26 \(Habilitation and rehabilitation\)](#).

Funding for a Disability Liaison Officer at Canberra Health Services

We call for a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) position to be funded at Canberra Health Services and Canberra Hospital, to advocate on behalf of patients with disabilities⁵.

A DLO could be contacted to assist and advocate for patients, help people with disabilities to be heard, believed, and understood during their stay, and assist those who may have specific difficulties communicating with healthcare professionals. They would also be useful in assisting people with disabilities in navigating the complex healthcare system and connecting them to services and supports.

This could be modelled from currently existing positions such as the Veterans Liaison Nurses or Indigenous Liaison Officers within Canberra Health Services, or peer support workers in the mental health system.

⁵ Women With Disabilities ACT (2023). *Third Action Plan Consultation*. Available at <https://d35ohva3c1yycw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/28150536/WWDACT-Submission-to-Third-Action-Plan.pdf>

This will represent progress in the wellbeing indicators [Access to Services](#), [Human rights](#), [Overall Health](#), [Mental Health](#), [Access to Health Services](#), [Feeling safe](#). It will enable compliance with CRPD [Article 6 \(Women with disabilities\)](#), [Article 9 \(Accessibility\)](#), [Article 25 \(Health\)](#), and [Article 26 \(Habilitation and rehabilitation\)](#).

Funding for affordable, accessible and disability-informed Assisted Reproductive Technology in the ACT

We call for a publicly funded low-cost Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Clinic in the ACT. We note that increasing access and reducing cost of ART were proposed next steps in the *ACT Government Response to Assisted Reproductive Technology: Regulation and Access*⁶. As there are no subsidised ART clinics in the ACT, accessing low-cost fertility treatment requires travelling interstate, which is incredibly inaccessible for women* with disabilities. We call for budget measures that will begin implementing affordable and accessible ART in the ACT.

Women* with disabilities face unique barriers in accessing ART. WWDACT's membership has reported complications accessing fertility treatment, facing discrimination and misinformation from treatment providers and being subjected to unnecessary and confusing legal requirements including additional waivers. They report feeling alienated by ART services as service providers rarely encounter people with disabilities⁷. People with disabilities experience additional struggles to afford costs of treatment, and are less able to travel to access lower-cost options⁸. Any budget measures implementing affordable and accessible ART should consider the needs of people with disabilities and should ensure that services are disability-informed.

⁶ ACT Health (2022). *Assisted Reproductive Technology: Regulation and Access*. Available at https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2062911/Assisted-Reproductive-Technology-Regulation-and-Access-ACT-Government-Response.pdf

⁷ Women With Disabilities ACT (2023). *Third Action Plan Consultation*.

⁸ Women With Disabilities Australia (2019). *The Status of Women and Girls with Disability in Australia*. Available at <https://wwda.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Status-of-Women-and-Girls-with-Disability-Australia.pdf>

This will represent progress in the wellbeing indicators [Access to Services](#), [Human rights](#), [Access to Health Services](#), [Feeling safe](#), [Quality of Time](#). It will enable compliance with CRPD [Article 6 \(Women with disabilities\)](#), [Article 9 \(Accessibility\)](#), [Article 23 \(Respect for home and the family\)](#) and [Article 25 \(Health\)](#).

Funding for full implementation of Disability and Women's* Strategies

We call for comprehensive funding for existing strategy development and implementation, including the ACT Disability Strategy, ACT Disability Health Strategy, ACT Disability Justice Strategy, and Third Women's Action Plan.

As a Disabled Persons Organisation, WWDACT is committed to participating in co-design processes for policies and programs that affect women* with disabilities. Additional resourcing and compensation for strategy ideation would enable WWDACT and other representative organisations to better represent and consult our memberships, and be more effectively involved in the co-design process.

It is also imperative that appropriate funding is allocated to implementation of these strategies and action plans. This will maximise outcomes for people with disabilities and women*, ensuring that every action can be taken to improve wellbeing under the ACT wellbeing indicators.

We particularly urge the ACT Government to guarantee funding to the development of the ACT Disability Strategy in the 2023-24 Budget, to allow this strategy to keep pace with other ongoing strategy development such as the Disability Health Strategy, Disability Justice Strategy, and Inclusive Education Strategy. It is imperative that these strategies align with each other and promote a shared approach to policies and programs affecting people with disabilities.

This will represent progress across all wellbeing indicators for people with disabilities, but in particular [Access to Services](#), [Human rights](#), [Access to Health Services](#), [Feeling safe](#), [Quality of Time](#), [Feeling that voice and perspective matter](#), [Sense of belonging and inclusion](#), [Living standards](#), [Employment](#), [Overall health](#).

It will enable compliance with CRPD [Article 4 \(General obligations\)](#), [Article 6 \(Women with disabilities\)](#), [Article 9 \(Accessibility\)](#), [Article 12 \(Equal recognition before the law\)](#), [Article 25 \(Health\)](#), and [Article 29 \(Participation in political and public life\)](#).

Other priorities

WWDACT has engaged with several ACT Government Consultations during the 2022-23 budget period, notably including the *Inquiry into abortion and reproductive choice in the ACT* (August 2022), and the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 Third Action Plan Consultation* (February 2023). In addition, we have been consulting with our Policy Advisory Committee on key priorities for women* with disabilities in the ACT. A comprehensive summary of key recommendations and funding opportunities from these consultations is presented in Attachment B.

Endorsements

WWDACT endorses the recommendations made by the following organisations in their submissions to the ACT Government Budget 2023-24 Consultation:

ACT Council of Social Service



Women's Health Matters



Advocacy for Inclusion



ACT Down Syndrome Association



WWDACT looks forward to the coming budget and welcomes the opportunity to discuss these priorities further. We are happy for this submission to be made public.

To discuss this submission please contact Kat Reed, CEO at ceo@wwdact.org.au.