



**ACT Council of Social Services**  
6 Gritten St, Weston ACT 2611

**ACT Down Syndrome Association**  
Building 1, Pearce Community Centre, Pearce ACT 2607

**Advocacy for Inclusion**  
202, Griffin Centre, 20 Genge St, Canberra City, 2601

**Women with Disabilities ACT**  
Building 1, Pearce Community Centre Pearce ACT, 2607

11 December 2023

## Joint Media Release: Disability Sector Welcomes Rachel Stephen-Smith As New Disability Minister

On 11/12/2023 it was announced Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith will become the Minister for Disability in the ACT, replacing Minister Emma Davidson. We welcome Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith as the new Minister for Disability and look forward to a vibrant and robust working relationship with her and her team. We are eager to assist Minister Stephen-Smith to continue the vital work of delivering better conditions for all people with disabilities in the ACT. Minister Stephen-Smith has been a trusted pair of hands in the disability sector in the past and has made a significant impact delivering the ACT Disability Health Strategy in 2023.

We thank Minister Emma Davidson for her leadership and support in her time as Disability Minister. Through current immense reforms in both the local and national disability sectors, Minister Davidson has shown dedication and compassion for the disability community and we know she will bring this level of enthusiasm and care to her new portfolio.

We call for continued momentum in the delivery of the ACT Disability Strategy as well as the ACT Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review. We look forward to collaborating with Minister Stephen-Smith and her team to ensure strong disability sector and equal human rights for people with disability in the ACT.

*'AFI welcomes Rachel Stephen-Smith back into the disability portfolio. Minister Stephen-Smith knows the portfolio and has remained connected to it delivering progress towards a health strategy. There will be important tasks ahead delivering the promised new foundational supports and we need the Barr government to deliver its promised funded and robust ACT Disability Strategy. We thank Emma Davidson for her contribution to disability rights work especially her collaborative approach to work with disability organisations and commitment to consultation', said AFI Head of Policy Craig Wallace.*

Winner 2012 International Women's Day Award, Community Category

Winner 2015 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards, Excellence in Championing Human Rights

# STRONG WOMEN STRONG VOICES

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**Kat Reed, CEO of Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) said,** *'WWDACT looks forward to working closely with Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith to continue to improve the wellbeing and health outcomes of women with disabilities\* in the ACT. Minister Stephen-Smith's experience with the portfolio and her commitment to addressing the intersectional lived experience of women with disabilities will be an asset to the ACT government's upcoming response to the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review.'*

**ACT Down Syndrome Association CEO Shannon Kolak said,** *'We have enjoyed working alongside Minister Emma Davidson and her team. She has been a fierce advocate for the disability community and we wish her every success with her new Portfolios. We have worked with Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith in her previous role as Minister for Disability and as the current ACT Minister for Health and know our community is in very capable and experienced hands. We look forward to continuing to build a strong working relationship with Minister Stephen-Smith as we embark on a time of reform and change for the disability sector.'*

#### **Media Contacts**

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Kat Reed, Chief Executive Officer, Women with Disabilities ACT – 0412 094 757

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

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