



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

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

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

Media Release – Responses to Disability Royal Commission must tackle root causes of violence and exclusion

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As the Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability is handed to the Governor-General ACT groups representing people with disability have called on the Australian and ACT Government's to step up with policies, investments and legislative changes to address the fundamental inequalities it has highlighted.

Craig Wallace, Head of Policy at Advocacy for Inclusion said "Over four years the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability conducted the most expensive and complex Royal Commission in history. People with disability told the Commission about lives characterised by violence, bullying, neglect, restraint and exclusion.

"This is the latest in many inquiries as well as horrific public exposes like Monday nights ABC Four Corners program. Australia now needs to turn the page from scandals and reviews to sustained reform. A piecemeal response will not be enough this time and our [submission to the Royal Commission](#) called for National Cabinet and the Australian Government to make real changes to legislation, planning, policy and investment that deliver lasting change.

"Instead of business as usual we must address the underlying issues which make people unsafe and marooned in a parallel universe of segregated spaces and services – these include inaccessible education, employment, healthcare and housing along with poverty, unchecked discrimination and an over-representation of people with disability in the justice system

"Concrete change is needing including a complete overhaul of Australia's disability discrimination framework; an effort to lift disabled people out of poverty; more accessible affordable housing in the community; a drive towards inclusive education; ensuring the right to justice; making healthcare accessible; delivering the promise of NDIS and work to ensure supported decision making and end violence", Craig Wallace said.

Kat Reed, Chief Executive Officer of Women With Disabilities ACT said "while it will take time for all of us to absorb and respond to the report we already know from the extensive public hearings that the issues raised in the Royal Commission require action from all levels of government and the broader community.

“Here in the ACT they require that we finalise and implement a full funded ACT Disability Strategy to improve outcomes across the board for people with disability specially for women* and girls. WWDACT have called for the ACT Government to prioritise actions which address violence against women, including an ACT Strategy to End Violence against Women* and Children; work to improve health and wellbeing and safety and inclusion. We have specifically called for work to ensure that supported decision making is the default for sexual and reproductive health matters, with strong safeguards against coercion and abuse.

“The hearings of the Commission, which crossed over with COVID, threw a spotlight on poor health access and services for people with disability characterised by inaccessible infrastructure, diagnostic overshadowing and a lack of affordable and accessible services across acute and primary care, including fertility services. We need a fully funded and operational ACT Disability Health Strategy as promised by the ACT Government”, Kat Reed said

Shannon Kolak, Chief Executive Officer of the ACT Down Syndrome Association pointed out that the Royal Commission had highlighted the many failings and barriers faced by children with disability in accessing quality education.

“Its time to fully realise Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability which provides for the right of students with disability to inclusive education at all levels. The Convention prohibits exclusion from the general education system on the basis of disability and requires reasonable accommodation and supports to be provided, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

“The nations capital should lead on inclusive education – but currently we do not. The Governments commitment to develop an ACT Inclusive Education Strategy is promising and we must now accelerate work to progressively move away from segregated education and deliver a good experience for students with all kinds of disability in our mainstream schools.

“We expect the Royal Commissions reports will be lengthy and complex and our organisations will be undertaking further analysis in the coming days”, Shannon Kolak concluded.

Contacts: Kat Reed, Chief Executive Officer, WWDACT on 0412 094 757; Shannon Kolak on 0408 646 857; and Craig Wallace, Head of Policy AFI on 0477 200 755

* 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.