

# **Women with Disabilities ACT**

## **Annual Report**

**1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023**

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Women With Disabilities ACT acknowledges and pays respect to the Ngunnawal peoples, the traditional custodians of the ACT Region, on whose land our office is located. We pay our respects to 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. We acknowledge that the land we are meeting and working on is stolen and that sovereignty has never ceded.

## About Us

Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a Disabled Person’s Organisation (DPO) that practices systemic advocacy on behalf of women, girls, gender diverse, and non-binary people (women\*) with disabilities in the ACT. We follow 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).

Systemic advocacy aims to create a more inclusive community through changes to legislation, policy, and practices. WWDACT uses systemic advocacy to protect and enforce the rights and interests of women\* with disabilities in the ACT.

## Contact

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# Vision, Mission & Values

## Vision

Women and girls\* with disabilities have equal rights and are valued, respected and empowered so they can thrive.

## Mission

WWDACT undertakes systemic advocacy to advance and uphold the rights to freedom, health and dignity of women\* and girls with disabilities.

## Values

### Led by lived experience

We are affiliated as a Disabled Person's Organisation (DPO) and are primarily led and governed by women\* with disabilities.

### Feminist and intersectional

We aim to be as inclusive and intersectional in our advocacy as possible.

### Human Rights Based

We follow 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).

### Evidence informed

We focus on achieving the best outcomes for women\* and girls with a disability by informing our work on lived experience, national and international research and data.

## List of Board Members

### Current

#### **Isabel Moss (Board Chair since November 2022, member since December 2020)**

Isabel is a young woman with lived experience of disability and an advocate for the Queer\* community. She is passionate about promoting intersectionality, especially to ensure neuro-divergent young women and young Queer\* people are provided a platform and an accessible space to advocate for change.

From her studies and work in policy, Isabel has a strong background in the systemic issues that are facing women with disabilities, especially Queer\* women in the ACT. However, her work with students, and her own background, has also exposed her to the many lived experiences of women with disability in the ACT and the importance of empathy when approaching peer support.

#### **Karen Hedley (Director)**

Karen Hedley's 30-year career has been dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights of disabled people and increasing the use of easy to understand communication for the benefit of all in the community.

Karen was recognised in 2015 for a lifetime achievement of "Making a significant and stunning contribution to growth in policy and practice in protecting and promoting human rights for people with a disability over 22 years" in the ACT Chief Minister's Award for Inclusion She was also a

finalist in the 2022 Awards for her social enterprise The Easy Read Toolbox, where most of the people she employs are disabled.

### **Eliza Moloney (Director)**

Hi, my name's Eliza. I've been living and working in the ACT since 2017 and I'm passionate about working at the intersection of health and disability, and the social determinants of health.

I currently work at Cancer Australia, but have experience in the ACT Legislative Assembly and the community sector. I am also a passionate health consumer representative, hoping to make good use of my experiences in the ACT's health system. I have a brain injury and several chronic health conditions. I hope to bring my experience and skills in fundraising, grant writing, and stakeholder liaison to WWDACT. I have been engaged with WWDACT as a member for several years, and have always appreciated their advocacy and peer support. I also loved Pitch your Passion! and would love to see it return. I was previously a board member of the Brain Tumour Alliance ACT, and currently assist the Australia Sri Lankan Buddhist Association of Canberra with grant applications. In 2020, I completed the Audrey Fagan Board Traineeship Program.

### **Beth Wurcker (Director)**

Beth has worked in the not for profit aged care and disability sector for over 30 years. As a person with a disability that mainly affects her mobility she is in a good position to understand and connect with older people and people living with disability.

Beth holds a Bachelor of Community Education (Counselling), loves working on projects that enhance quality of life and building strong

teams. Beth also has a passion for improving access to programs for people facing vulnerability and exclusion. She has held a number of volunteer roles in both disability focused and mainstream organisations including as an MS Ambassador and Emergency Services.

### **Deleana (Dee) Quinn (Director)**

I am new to the ACT and new to WWDACT, but closely align with the values and mission of the organisation and believe I can offer a needed skillset to the position of Board Director. Having grown up with a brother with intellectual and physical disabilities, and also experiencing a physical disability myself, I am passionate about the challenges facing women and non-binary people with a disability and care deeply about the complex issues facing those trying to navigate the various systems within our society. I am currently a senior level manager at a not-for-profit organisation with a broad range of project management, philanthropic fundraising and event planning experience. I am nominating for the role of Board Director at WWDACT as I believe I can use my skills and experience to help further WWDACT's valuable work in an area that is deeply personal to me.

### **Former**

### **Barbara Voss (Treasurer)**

### **Zoe Rose (Director)**

## List of staff members

### Current

#### **Kat Reed (CEO)**

since November 2020

#### **Pippa Newman (Policy Officer)**

since October 2022

### Former

#### **Ruth O'Brien (Admin and Social Media Officer)**

to October 2022

#### **Megan Hagan (Project Officer)**

to October 2022

## Our Members

Membership is free and comes in two forms, associate membership and full membership.

- Full membership is open to a person who believes in the values, mission, objects and purposes of the Association; and identifies as a woman, girl, non-binary or gender diverse person with disability;
- Associate membership is open to all people with disabilities, people without disabilities or organisations who believe in the values, mission, objects & purposes of the Association.

Approved WWDACT membership will provide you with:

- Formal organisation membership on the WWDACT Register of Members,
- Subscription to the WWDACT eBulletins,
- The opportunity to represent WWDACT at relevant forums and consultations,
- Voting rights at WWDACT Annual General Meetings (full members only).

Our members provide us with knowledge based in lived experience which helps us to:

- Identify areas of concern for women\* with disabilities in the ACT.
- Identify problems that exist within ACT systems.
- Understand how recent international and national research applies (or does not apply) to our local context

To become a WWDACT member, visit our website  
[www.wwdact.org.au/membership/](http://www.wwdact.org.au/membership/)

## Year in Review

2022-2023 was a busy time for WWDACT. With the commencement of our new 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, we have redoubled our energies in the areas of violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and health for women\* and girls with disabilities.

With increased policy capacity we have become more engaged in government consultations, policy planning, advocacy, stakeholder engagement and collaboration with other ACT Disability Organisations. The introduction of our inaugural Policy Advisory Committee has strengthened our connection to our membership and ensured that our work reflects the views and priorities of our members. A highlight of the year was holding consultations with our membership to ensure their feedback was guiding our policy submissions. Because of these consultations, we were able to produce thorough and detailed submissions to the ACT Women's Plan, ACT Budget Consultation and the NDIS review. Thank you to all our members who shared their time and stories with us this year – whether through surveys, email, online or in-person.

We have also continued our significant presence in the ACT community, through participating in a range of advisory bodies, meetings, panels and conferences. We have supported our members to share their stories with the media to promote awareness of issues affecting women\* and girls with disability.

## Significant Changes In State Of Affairs

There have been no significant changes in the State of Affairs of the Company during the reporting period.

## Our Advocacy, Programs and Community

### Policy

The 2022-2023 financial year was a big year in the policy and advocacy space in the ACT, with several multi-year strategies in development covering health, gender equality, and disability inclusion. WWDACT has been involved in extensive consultation for the ACT Disability Health Strategy 2023-2033, the ACT Third Women's Action Plan 2023-2026, and the ACT Disability Strategy 2023-2033. We have also been involved in consultations for the draft ACT Disability Inclusion Bill alongside our colleagues at Advocacy for Inclusion and ACT Down Syndrome Association.

We made a detailed submission to the ACT Budget 2023-24 consultation, offering a wide range of recommendations across health, violence prevention, and implementation of ACT disability and women's strategies. Additionally, we joined forces with Disabled Person's Organizations and Disability Representative Organizations to call for continued investment in key disability strategies, along with improvements in healthcare, housing, justice, and mental health services.

As a result of our advocacy, funding for a Disability Inclusion Advocate position at Domestic Violence Crisis service was included in the 2023-2024 ACT Budget.

This year, we received funding from the Department of Social Services through Women with Disabilities Australia to create a report for the NDIS review. To produce this report, we conducted a variety of consultations

and interviews with our members. We also collaborated with Advocacy for Inclusion on a joint survey. Our members shared their experiences, highlighting the challenges of accessing the NDIS, the struggles they face in having their needs recognized and met within the system, and the need for improved measures to protect against violence and abuse.

Our formal letters and submissions throughout the year included:

- Submission to the Inquiry into abortion and reproductive choice in the ACT (with Advocacy for Inclusion)
- Submission to the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 Third Action Plan
- Submission to the ACT Budget 2023-24 Consultation
- Submission to the ACT Preventative Health Plan 2020-2025

## **Meetings, Forums and Advisory Groups**

Throughout this year, WWDACT remained engaged in numerous advisory groups at both the local and national levels. We continued to communicate and collaborate with various organizations, actively participating in policy networks and advocating together for common goals.

During the 2022-2023 Financial Year WWDACT was involved in the following advisory groups and committees:

- ACT Disability Health Strategy Steering Group
- ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Women
- ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- *Our Watch* Changing The Landscape Project Steering Committee
- ACT Disability and Carers Policy Group

- *HCCA* Chronic Conditions Network
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Women with Disabilities Australia National Women's Alliance Policy Advisory Group
- *NEDA* Our Lives Our Way Advisory Group
- ACT Disability Organisations Budget Group
- Voluntary Assisted Dying Disability and Mental Health Community Organisation Roundtable
- Abortion Access Roundtable
- SHFPACT Safer Girls Safer Women Advisory Group
- headspace Consortium
- *HCCA* Access and Design Reference Group
- Better Safety Steering Group Committee
- Sexual Assault Reform response working group

We've actively engaged in informal networks and collaborative efforts with DPOs (Disabled Person's Organisations) and DROs (Disability Representative Organisations) both within the ACT and on a national scale. We've also worked closely with women's organisations, such as Women's Health Matters. Various organisations have invited us to provide feedback on their diversity and inclusion policies, including *HCCA*'s Diversity and Inclusion document, which is targeted at healthcare organizations and professionals in the ACT. We look forward to continuing to assist organisations in our networks to improve their inclusion policies and publications.

We have continued to maintain strong communications with the ACT Minister for Disability, Emma Davidson MLA, as well as other ACT

Government stakeholders including the Office for Disability and Office for Women.

## **Programs and Projects**

In February 2023 we launched the inaugural WWDACT Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), a group of 5 women\* with lived experience of disability. The PAC meets monthly to discuss ongoing WWDACT consultations, policy initiatives, and other advocacy matters concerning women\* with disabilities in the ACT. They are one of the only groups of their kind in disability organisations in the ACT.

Over the year the PAC has given feedback on topics including the ACT Women's Action Plan, Voluntary Assisted Dying, ACT Budget and Preventative Health Care. Additionally, they received Consumer Representative Training from HCCA, and represented WWDACT on the HCCA Chronic Conditions Network and in the Voluntary Assisted Dying Roundtable discussion group.

As a lived experience organisation, the PAC has been invaluable to WWDACT's policy work, to ensure our policy responses are informed by and reflective of our diverse community. We look forward to continuing the PAC in 2023-2024.

## **Presentations**

WWDACT has been involved in a number of presentations during the year.

In November 2022 our CEO Kat Reed was invited to speak at the SHFPACT Safer Girls Safer Women Symposium about intersectionality.

The CEO was a panellist on a number of events run by local NGOs, raising awareness of the various issues for women\* with disabilities.

## **Media**

WWDACT has maintained and expanded its media presence, with interviews on TV, online and in print about issues impacting women\* with disabilities.

Kat Reed was chosen to ask a question on ABC's Q&A on 8 July 2022 about meaningfully including women\* with disability in advocacy around gender-based violence.

We maintained a media presence around the ACT Budget and consultations, making pre-budget and post-budget media statements alongside Advocacy for Inclusion and other ACT disability representative organisations. We have also provided feedback and support for other media campaigns including the launch of the ACTCOSS Cost of Living Report.

In June and July 2023 WWDACT collaborated with ABC News to bring to light issues faced by women\* with disabilities trying to access assisted reproductive technology. PAC Member Sarah Fisher and CEO Kat Reed participated in interviews and the story was shared nationally.

## **Online presence**

The WWDACT e-Bulletin is our primary way of engaging with our members and receives the most engagement. It's regularly distributed to

all our full and associate members. In the 2022-2023 period, we sent out six e-Bulletins, along with other email communications, which included updates about consultations, media opportunities, calls for advisory group participation, surveys, and notices for our Annual General Meeting.

Our WWDACT website acts as a central hub for our documents and reports dating back to 2012. It also allows members to join electronically. Over the 2022-2023 financial year, our website received approximately 5000 visits.

WWDACT has actively maintained a presence on social media platforms like Facebook (with 1600 followers) and Instagram (with 1400 followers). Our social media channels serve to keep our members informed about our ongoing projects, active surveys, opportunities for consultation, and press releases. We also share relevant information from other organisations.

## Financials

### Funding Acknowledgement

WWDACT would like to acknowledge and thank those who provided funding that enables us to undertake our work as a not for profit organisation.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance of the ACT Government under the Office for Disability in making it possible to undertake our work.

### Operating Results

The attached financial reports are for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

The Company finished the 2022-2023 Financial Year with a total equity of \$84,181, and net profit of \$35,511.