

Women With Disabilities ACT
(WWDACT)

Policy Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

Last updated November 2024

Background

The direct involvement of women* with disabilities in Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT)'s systemic advocacy has been an integral component of the organisation for many years. As a Disabled Person's Organisation (DPO) WWDACT takes seriously the concept of co-design and endeavours to ensure its policy, programs and projects are co-designed with the disability community in the ACT and region as much as possible.

The PAC will be a direct way for women* with disabilities to be involved in the systemic advocacy of WWDACT by engaging directly with the staff team responsible for delivering policy initiatives. The PAC will prioritise representation of members from intersectional and marginalized groups.

Purpose

WWDACT is committed to developing rigorous structures that ensure our organisation is representative of a wide range of women* with disabilities across the ACT and region and is accountable to who we represent.

This document outlines draft Terms of Reference (TORs) for WWDACT's Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), which will advise WWDACT on local and national policy issues.

Role of the Policy Advisory Committee

The role of the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) is to contribute to and help inform the policy work and systemic advocacy of WWDACT. This work may include, but is not limited to, providing feedback and input to Government submissions, providing feedback to stakeholders from the ACT government and from other advocacy organisations, and contributing to stand-alone discussion papers or internal policy.

The PAC shall function as an important vehicle to amplify the voices, insight and knowledge of different cohorts of women* with disabilities. It will include members with a diverse range of experiences and identities. Members of the Policy Advisory Committee will:

- Read provided materials before scheduled consultations and meetings
- Contribute to all relevant scheduled consultations and meetings
- Share relevant information with other Advisory Group members
- Provide out of session feedback to WWDACT from time to time, as required.

Policy Advisory Committee Expertise and Skills

All of WWDACT's work is grounded in a human rights framework. WWDACT practices intersectional and inclusive feminism and aims to ensure that the PAC is representative of the needs and views of a diverse range of women* living in the ACT and region. As well as having the technical expertise required for functional PAC, representatives will be selected for the PAC based on a range of experiences and expertise, including:

- Lived experience as a woman* with disabilities
- Lived experience navigating systems of disability support
- An understanding and working knowledge of the social model of disability and disability rights
- Lived experience of intersectionality, which could include any of the following experiences:

- Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and/or asexual
- Culturally and / or linguistically diverse
- People of colour
- Migrant and / or refugee
- From rural region and / or remote locations
- Living or have lived in institutional or segregated environments
- Currently or previously incarcerated
- Living in poverty
- Have intellectual or cognitive disability
- Older people (aged 65+)
- Young people (aged 15 – 30)

Structure and Membership

The PAC will consist of 6 women* with disabilities acting in their own personal capacity. No more than 7 people will sit on the PAC at any one time.

Individuals shall be full members of WWDACT, selected by the WWDACT staff.

When appointing members, WWDACT will ensure a broad array of voices are represented (as outlined above).

Term Lengths & Extensions

Members will be appointed for 2-year terms, with the option to extend for an additional 2 years. Requests for term extensions must be assessed by the WWDACT Staff, to ensure the Committee maintains a diverse representation of views and experience. WWDACT Staff may decline a term extension request only for the following reasons:

- A significant shift in the Committee's strategic priorities or membership needs, requiring new perspectives.
- A need to enhance the diversity of representation on the Committee to reflect community demographics or priorities.
- Concerns about the member's engagement, including consistent attendance, active participation, or adherence to Committee guidelines.
- Any changes in a member's circumstances that affect their ability to fulfill Committee responsibilities.

If a member's request for an extension is declined, they may request a written justification from the WWDACT Staff.

Members are welcome to reapply through the regular application process at the end of their term.

Application Process

Applications are submitted via written application submitted through a form, with an alternative option for video submissions.

Selections are made primarily by the WWDACT Policy Officer, who reviews applications to ensure a balanced range of experiences, interests, and identities within the group. These decisions are subsequently confirmed by the WWDACT CEO.

To enhance the transparency of the application process, additional options are available to the WWDACT Staff including:

- Conducting brief interviews with shortlisted candidates, with interview questions provided in advance.
- Engaging additional WWDACT staff to audit the application process internally.

Meetings and Consultations

WWDACT will hold formal meetings over Zoom or at WWDACT's office once per month for 10 months of the year. Meetings will run for 2 hours. Dates will be set in advance, and all members will be expected to attend unless there are extenuating circumstances.

WWDACT staff (primarily the WWDACT Policy Officer & WWDACT CEO) will be responsible for chairing, facilitating and minute-taking the meetings. All other secretariat support will be provided by the WWDACT staff team.

PAC members are required to attend all formal meetings wherever possible. PAC members must submit a formal apology if they are unable to make a meeting. WWDACT understands that sometimes circumstances prevent participation no matter how much planning has occurred, particularly in the disability community. However, in order to ensure the group remains representative and to ensure WWDACT can continue its work, all members are asked to engage respectfully and communicate with the WWDACT staff team as much as possible if there are obstacles to attendance.

PAC members may miss up to 2 meetings of the PAC without an apology, and up to 4 meetings of the PAC with a formal apology, in a calendar year. WWDACT reserves the right to end the term of members of the PAC due to non-attendance.

WWDACT will endeavour to provide for all access requirements as much as possible (please see the "Responsibilities of WWDACT" section for more information).

WWDACT may also engage with individuals or small groups of individuals from the PAC outside of formal meetings. Not all PAC members will always be engaged at the one time. How and when PAC members contribute outside of formal meetings will depend upon the needs of WWDACT and the policy issues of the day.

Meeting papers such as agendas and attachments will be prepared by WWDACT and sent to the PAC no less than 7 days in advance of the scheduled PAC meeting. Full copies of the minutes shall be provided to the PAC no later than 21 days following each formal meeting.

There may be opportunities for PAC members to lead policy initiatives and design programs and projects. This is subject to the capacity and resources of the WWDACT Staff. PAC members must seek approval from the WWDACT CEO. All initiatives must be in line with WWDACT Strategic Priority Areas unless given explicit approval from the WWDACT CEO.

Conduct

Members of the PAC will be expected to comply with the *WWDACT Code of Conduct* policy. The PAC will also discuss its own expectations and Code of Conduct in the first meeting of the calendar year. WWDACT reserves the right to remove members whose behaviour conflicts with the policy and with the functionality of the PAC.

Responsibilities of WWDACT

WWDACT will endeavour to capture and take on all feedback and perspectives provided by members of the PAC in relation to policy matters. However, where views and discussions of the PAC are fragmented or inconclusive, WWDACT will retain the authority to resolve the matter in the best interest of its members.

WWDACT will provide and take responsibility for all secretariat and expenditure required for the funding of the PAC. This may include:

- The preparation and distribution of meeting papers and minutes
- The preparation and distribution of meeting schedules, meeting links and calendar invites and other required materials and information.
- The preparation and publication of any papers, reports, surveys and other material that the PAC resolves to develop.

WWDACT will organise and take responsibility for any training or other professional development members of the PAC request that improve their capacity to contribute to the PAC meetings.

WWDACT will take responsibility for ensuring that the accessibility needs of members are met at all meetings. Auslan interpretation and captioning shall be provided at every PAC meeting if required. WWDACT is committed to enabling the involvement of all women* with disability, including those who require the support of others to participate. WWDACT will engage support organisations where required, to seek their assistance in support women to participate in the PAC.

Remuneration

Policy Advisory Committee members may claim \$250 per meeting for their participation. Members who are unable to attend a meeting but provide detailed written feedback, feedback via phone call or through a one-on-one meeting with WWDACT Staff are entitled to remuneration as if they attended the meeting.

Members can be supported by WWDACT to engage in additional consultations and give additional feedback outside of meetings. This is part of their month's contributions and no additional payment will be provided.

Remuneration may be claimed via an invoice to WWDACT by the individual if they have an ABN or will be provided in the form of a gift voucher. WWDACT is not permitted to pay PAC members in cash.

Evaluation

WWDACT Staff will lead a major evaluation of the PAC once every 2 years, with smaller feedback sessions held at least once per year.

PAC members are encouraged to provide feedback on accessibility whenever they are able to, so that WWDACT can ensure that all members are fully supported to participate at all times.

Contact

For more information, please contact Kat Reed at ceo@wwdact.org.au or Pippa Newman at policy@wwdact.org.au.