



# **People With Disabilities**

ACT Inc

## **Annual Report 2015**

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This report is available on our website:

[www.pwdact.org.au](http://www.pwdact.org.au)

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Executive Officer

## **Traditional Owners**

People With Disabilities ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal People as the traditional owners of the land on which we work.

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## **ABOUT PWD ACT**

### **Our Vision**

People with disabilities are respected, valued and empowered to reach their full potential both as individuals and as contributing members of society.

### **Our Mission**

PWD ACT represents, promotes and supports the collective interests of people with disabilities. We work to bring about an inclusive society by:

Advocating for the removal of all attitudinal, physical and social barriers which prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in community life;

Working to improve policies, programs and practices in our society which support people with disabilities to have the best life possible; and

Collaborating with other ACT disability advocacy organisations to improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

**PWD ACT is funded by the ACT Government, Community Services Directorate.**



## **PWD ACT Inc. Annual Report 2015**

This Report covers the advocacy activities of People With Disabilities ACT Inc. from November 2014 to October 2015 and the Association's financial transactions for the 2014-2015 Financial Year. The Report has been prepared to reflect PWD ACT's Strategic Plan and Business Plan which in turn reflects PWD ACT's obligations under its funding agreement with Disability ACT. This Plan can be found on our Website [www.pwdact.org.au](http://www.pwdact.org.au)

### **Under our Funding Agreement with Disability ACT, PWD ACT is required to:**

- ◆ Implement six measures which act to increase the informed debate of issues affecting people with disabilities and which builds the capacity of people with disabilities to advocate on issues which affect them;
- ◆ Maintain one annual project which works to build an evidence base about the relevant needs of people with disabilities in the ACT, and
- ◆ Involvement in systemic advocacy projects which addresses issues affecting people with disabilities in the ACT.

### Newsletter

An issue of the PWD ACT Newsletter 'Out and About With Ability' has been prepared and distributed each month of the reporting period except for January. The newsletter informs PWD ACT members of our activities, provides information on ACT and National and International disability issues. The Newsletter has also included information on opportunities for community participation in particular employment vacancies, recreation, arts, culture, health and well-being. The Newsletter regularly includes contributions from ACT Government agencies and information on the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT. We continue to receive favourable comments on the content of the newsletter from people with disabilities and workers in the disability sector. Extracts are read on Radio 1RPH and items are reproduced in the newsletters of other disability organisations. We also produce a fortnightly bulletin for members with up to date news and notices.

### Member Activities

During the reporting period, PWD ACT held its 2014 AGM. Following the AGM we had a presentation from Sue Salthouse who answered questions about the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.

For the 2014 International Day of People with Disability, PWD ACT encouraged its members to participate at a Christmas community lunch held by the Rough Diamonds an Inclusive Social Group. PWD ACT is focusing less on organising functions for members and more on providing information to members about opportunities to participate in general community events.

PWD ACT participated in the Health and Well-Being Expo organised by SHOUT and held at the Hellenic Club on 3 September 2014. This year, PWD ACT was pleased to include on its tables information from a number of our organisational members including: Women With Disabilities ACT, Daryl's Den, Ethnic Disability ACT, Sharing Places, Hartley Life Care, the Belconnen Arts Centre, Community Inclusion Program, Access City Hotline and Radio 1RPH. PWD ACT was pleased to support its organisational members in this way.

Membership of PWD ACT continues to be free of charge for people with disabilities and this opportunity is promoted through our Newsletter. Organisational Members pay a small fee and are acknowledged in our Newsletter. In 2014-2015, PWD ACT experienced only a small growth in individual and organisational membership.

### Update of Website

PWD ACT continues to develop its website as an information source for members and the ACT Community. Our Administration Officer is taking increasing responsibility for maintaining and updating our website content. A Facebook page has been established and linked to the website. PWD ACT is now on Twitter via [@pwdact2](#). A new website has been developed at [www.pwdact.org.au](http://www.pwdact.org.au).

We will formally launch this website at our AGM.

## Regular Meetings with Stakeholders

People With Disabilities ACT continues to meet regularly with its stakeholders. PWD ACT's EO attends the quarterly forums conducted by Disability ACT and has regular contact with staff of Disability ACT and other ACT Agencies to bring to their notice issues affecting our members.

PWD ACT also attends meetings of the ACT Disability Advocacy Network (ACTDAN) to exchange information and work collaboratively on issues of common concern. ACTDAN now transacts its business by correspondence rather than in person meetings.

People With Disabilities ACT is a member of the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA), the peak body for disability advocacy. PWD ACT has a Memorandum of Understanding with People With Disability Australia and is also the ACT member of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations the peak body for the national organisations of people with disabilities and contributes to do the representative and advocacy work of these organisations. PWD ACT is a member of ACT Council of Social Services and brings a disability perspective to ACTCOSS submissions and consultations. An example is our contribution to ACTCOSS's 2016 budget submission on housing in which PWD ACT highlighted the need for new housing stock to be built in accordance with universal design principles and for the ACT Government to cease funding housing models based on congregate living arrangements for people with disability.

PWD ACT has also forged closer links with the ACT Council on the Ageing to work with ACTCOTA on many of its submissions as we both recognise that many amenities provided for older people are also of benefit to people with disabilities. PWD ACT also shares representation at some consultations especially with Women With Disabilities ACT and the ACT Branch of Blind Citizens Australia.

## Employment of People with Disabilities

PWD ACT continues to highlight the poor performance of the ACT Government as an employer of people with disabilities as highlighted by the statistics in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 *State of the Service Reports*. PWD ACT continues to call for an inquiry by the ACT Legislative Assembly into the employment of people with disabilities in the ACT. One of the outcomes of such an inquiry is to highlight those employment practices which have successfully increased the numbers and percentages of people with disabilities in employment in some Government and private sector agencies and advocate for their wider adoption in the ACT.

## Develop Organisational Capability

The PWD ACT Committee for the reporting period consisted of the following people:

**President** Terry Millar

**Vice-President** David Luck

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**Secretary** Sarah Ferguson

**Treasurer** Sue Carbone

**Committee members:** Juan de la Torre

**Sarah Ferguson** and **Juan De La Torre** have since resigned from the Committee.

During the financial year, PWD ACT employed two staff: Robert Altamore Executive Officer (20 hours per week) and Maida Kajkic Administrative Officer (14 hours per week).

During the year, Maida took responsibility for our payroll function when SHOUT was unable to continue performing this function for us.

PWD ACT continues to need Committee members to function as an organisation, accept and account for ACT Government funding and represent people with disabilities in the ACT.

## Finances

Lesley Porroj has audited PWD ACT's accounts. PWD ACT has a small surplus for this year. However, this small surplus arises as some employee entitlements were paid after 30 June. PWD ACT received its annual operating grant from Disability ACT and a separate grant under the ACT Government Scheme Equal Remuneration Order. This enables community organisations to pay increased staff salaries and wages arising from the Equal Remuneration Order which is an Order of the Fair Work Commission to raise, over time, the levels of salaries and wages paid to lower paid workers in the community sector. This additional grant is partly offset by a reduction to our annual recurrent grant.

PWD ACT also received a grant of \$1,000 from the Canberra Southern Cross Club. We gratefully acknowledge the Canberra Southern Club's continuing support for the previous 5 years. The Southern Cross Club grant will be used for our Access Campaign.

## Annual Evidence Based Project

### Access Project – campaign, policy and advocacy

PWD ACT commenced its Access Campaign Project in July 2015. Craig Wallace was engaged for 10 hours a week as Access Campaign Manager.

PWD ACT has embarked on a program of events, consultations, communications and campaign initiatives to place access for people with disability front and centre in the lead up to the next Budget and the ACT election.

We are also working to bring together decision makers, planners and thinkers on access and the future of Canberra to start a conversation about access in Canberra.

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The work aligns with priorities under the National Disability Strategy as well as *Involve - Canberra's Disability Commitment* that is the ACT's response to the Strategy. Access will also be important in enabling people with disability to realise the potential of the National Disability Insurance Scheme as it rolls out in the ACT trial site. In addition creating an accessible city responds to the needs of our ageing population in Canberra.

### **Key elements include:**

#### ***Social media forum***

PWDACT held a social media forum asking for views on Disability Access in Canberra from 10am - 2.00pm on Saturday 19 September 2015.

The forum was conducted on Facebook and Twitter using the hashtag [#CBRaccess](#) and sought community views on access to buildings, parking, taxi's, buses, shops, national institutions and the places we live and work in Canberra.

PWDACT's team was online during the forum and feedback from across platforms was subject to thematic analysis.

#### ***Online survey***

An online 'survey monkey' survey sought views from individual PWDACT members and members of the community about disability access issues. This online questionnaire was launched during the social media forum.

#### ***Access phone out***

PWDACT held an access phone out consultation to most of our 30 organisational members as well as other key stakeholders during September/October to gauge their views on where access barriers exist and how these can be addressed.

#### ***Access City Q&A @ the PWDACT AGM***

We are holding a Q&A style forum following the PWDACT AGM at the ACT Legislative Assembly to discuss how we can work together as a community to shape Canberra as an access city of the future. The forum will bring together thinkers about ageing and disability, policy makers, business and community leaders to discuss their response to disability, ageing and the National Disability Strategy.

The consultation has also taken views via email.

### **Key findings:**

While the consultations are ongoing there are some interim findings that suggest a need for ongoing work and coordination on disability access in the ACT. These include prevalent barriers, some beacons of better practice and uneven intra-govt and organisation coordination around disability access issues. We also made a Budget Submission within the 2016/17 Budget Community consultation process about access issues.

## **Systemic Advocacy Projects**

### **Taxi Services**

PWD ACT is contributing to the ACT Government Taxi Innovation Review. The driver for this review is the pending arrival in Canberra of digitally based ride sharing services such as Uber and Go Catch with use mobile phone digital technology to bring drivers and persons wanting rides together outside the conventional taxi service. PWD ACT contributed to the Terms of Reference for this Review, provided a detailed submission to the Discussion Paper and met with the Official from the chief Minister's Department responsible for the Review. PWD ACT pointed out the dangers of Uber style services for people with disabilities as vulnerable users, advocated for a regulatory regime to address these dangers and drew attention to the need for training for people with disabilities to give them the skills to be safe and effective users of transport services in the new transport environment.

PWD ACT was concerned to learn on a public holiday Monday that Uber Services will commence in Canberra on 30 October. PWD ACT and other organisations were promised further consultation on the regulatory framework for Uber prior to the commencement of Uber in Canberra. However, it appears that much of the regulatory framework has been already settled with Uber and we will have little opportunity to change anything or address issues such as complaints processes and consumer awareness training. It is regrettable that the ACT Government has put its desire to appear to be a leader in introducing digital based ride share service ahead of the need to ensure a regulatory framework which gives confidence to vulnerable users.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

PWD ACT has included information on NDIS implementation both locally and nationally in each edition of its Newsletter and in many of its fortnightly Member's e-Bulletins. PWD ACT has also responded to inquiries from members of the public seeking information about the NDIS and its implementation in the ACT and has fielded media inquiries on these matters. PWD ACT attends bi-monthly meetings of the NDIA and ACT advocacy organisations to exchange information on issues arising from the experiences of people with disabilities as they transfer to the NDIS.

### **Access to the Environment**

Since September 2015 our work on this matter has come under our Access Campaign. However, alongside this campaign, PWD ACT continues to pursue specific access issues.

PWD ACT put a detailed submission to the review of the Access to Premises Standard. This Review provided the opportunity to raise our concerns regarding the effect of the 2011 amendments which re-designed disability parking spaces to increase the overall space but reduce the parking space by inclusion of a side area for the setting down of mobility devices which could not be used for parking. You can read our submission our [www.pwdact.org.au](http://www.pwdact.org.au)

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PWD ACT continues to receive and respond to complaints and media stories about availability of and use of disability parking spaces.

PWD ACT provided input into a Canberra Times article raising access concerns regarding the transfer of wheelchair users to and from aircraft at Canberra Airport.

Margo Hodge represented both PWD ACT and Women With Disabilities ACT at the early consultations on the development of the ACT Light Rail.

PWD ACT is in contact with The Physical Disability Council of NSW in relation to provision of disability accessible toilet and washroom facilities for persons travelling on the Hume Highway on the Canberra to Sydney side. There are facilities on one side of the highway but not the other. PWD ACT continues to advocate for the adoption of principles of universal design and accessibility in accordance with Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

### ACT Human Rights Framework

PWD ACT participated in consultation meetings and put a submission to the consultation on changes to the ACT Human Rights Framework. The submission focused on the value of disability specific and disability focused complaints handling and resolution processes and the risks of a loss of expertise and focus arising from proposals to subsume disability into generic complaints processes. You can read our submission on our website at [www.pwdact.org.au](http://www.pwdact.org.au)

### ACTION Buses

PWD ACT welcomes ACTION's role out of the **Flexible bus service** as an additional transport option for people in Canberra. The consultative Committee of which PWD ACT was a member has ceased to operate. We will seek new consultation arrangements with ACTION in the coming year.

Mobile phone apps are of increasing assistance to people with disabilities in using buses. However, the provision of on-board announcements of bus stops remains spasmodic and there is resistance to these announcements from some drivers and commuters. We also have continuing concerns arising from the inaccessibility of much of the physical environment in which bus stops are located, the lack of continuity of access between buses and taxis at interchanges and the implications of the re-development of the Woden bus interchange.

### COTA ACT Advocacy for Older Canberrans

PWD ACT continues to work closely with COTA ACT participate in its access initiatives for older Canberrans. PWD ACT participated in and contributed to COTA ACT's Age Friendly suburbs forums as many age friendly initiatives are of real benefit to people with disabilities especially in relation to access to the physical environment, housing, transport and access to information.

### UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

People With Disabilities ACT continues to base our work on this Convention and explain its application in our written submissions and in person comments on ACT Government policies and actions.

### Policy Statements

As an outcome of the MOU with PWD Australia, PWD ACT has access to PWD Australia's Policy Statements and governance tools and is making use of those Statements in its systemic advocacy submissions and governance.

### Awards

A number of people connected with PWD ACT were recognized in the 2014 ACT Inclusion Awards.

PWD ACT congratulates Craig Wallace who received the Chief Minister's Award for Excellence and the life time achievement Award.

PWD ACT also congratulates Terry Millar who shared the Long Service Award/Support Worker with Nancy Tingey.

### Acknowledgements

On behalf of PWD ACT I acknowledge the following persons and organisations for their contributions to PWD ACT during the year.

- The ACT Community Services Directorate and Canberra Southern Cross Club - for funding;
- Our organisational members for their continuing support;
- The SHOUT organisation and staff.

PWD ACT is a member of SHOUT (Self Help Organisations United Together) which manages the building in which we have our office and provides administrative, IT and practical day to day support to our staff.

- Lesley Porroj our Auditor.
- Amanda Plowright for our website and
- Members of the Committee: Terry Millar, David, Luck, Sue Carbone, Sarah Ferguson and Juan de la Torre.