



People With Disabilities

ACT Inc

Annual Report 2013

Financial Year: 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013

This Report is available on our website: www.pwdact.org.au

Prepared by:

ROBERT ALTAMORE OAM, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAIDA KAJKIC, OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

PWD ACT Inc Annual Report

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.

President's Report

Executive Officers Report

- **This Report covers the activities of People With Disabilities ACT Inc from October 2012 to November 2013**
- **The Association's financial transactions for the 2012-2013 Financial Year.**
- **The Report has been prepared to reflect PWD ACT's Strategic Plan and Business Plan which can be found on our website**

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





2012/2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 16 November 2013

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

People With Disabilities ACT Inc. (PWD ACT) has maintained steady progress during this financial year. We have continued to provide support and advice as requested and have remained responsive to relevant issues in the ACT.

The Management Committee has met regularly to oversee the activities of the organisation. We have welcomed the recruitment of David Luck to the Committee of Management and will benefit from his experience of the sector. PWD has fulfilled its responsibilities under our funding agreement with Disability ACT and we have continued to meet with them at quarterly intervals. Disability ACT has maintained our funding and we thank them for their ongoing support.

PWD ACT has been represented at, and participated in, all relevant forums during this period. We have participated in discussions on various topics but have focused on three major issues, the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, access in all forms, both physical and to services and supports, and the employment of people with disabilities within the public service.

My thanks especially go to Robert and Maida for their continued commitment and support. My appreciation goes also to the members of the PWD ACT Committee of Management and members for their support.

Terry Millar

President

16 November 2013

Executive Officer's Report

Newsletter

The PWD ACT Newsletter '**Out and About With Ability**' has been published each month. This year in addition to the regular columns on employment vacancies, health and well-being and opportunities for community participation in sport and recreation and arts and culture, we have added a new column 'Things You Can Do' which contains information on practical actions members can take to advocate on disability issues eg. signing a petition or writing a letter. The Newsletter includes information about our own activities and the activities of our member organisations. We regularly include contributions from ACT Government agencies on developments in the disability service sector. Our Newsletter has also included articles on advocacy issues provided by our Executive Officer, and information on the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT and at the National level. We encourage contributions from our members including contributions to columns we have available for 'letters' and 'helpful hints'. A number of these articles have been written by our Secretary Sarah Ferguson. We continue to receive favorable comment on the Newsletter from people with disabilities and staff of disability service organisations who find the Newsletter a valuable source of information.

This year, as an additional service to our members and the disability sector, PWD ACT has provided eBulletins to members with up-to-date news and notices. This e-Bulletin are produced three times a month and has been well received by its readers.

Member Activities

Our 2012AGM was held in October, and was attended by 22 people. Following the AGM we had a presentation from members of the Review Panel which had been set up earlier in the year to review the activities of PWD ACT. This was followed by a lively discussion about their recommendations. PWD ACT is continuing to implement the recommendations of the Review Panel.

PWD ACT celebrated the International Day for People with Disabilities on Monday 3 December 2012 with a morning tea at the SHOUT office. This was attended by 25 people. PWD ACT obtained a grant for this activity from NICAN under the International Day Grants Program.

In keeping with our philosophy of promoting inclusion and community participation for people with disabilities, PWD ACT prefers to encourage and support our members to participate in generic community events rather than organising its own functions for members.

Membership of PWD ACT continues to be free of charge to people with disabilities and this fact is promoted through our Newsletter. Organisational Members of PWD ACT pay a small fee and are acknowledged in the Newsletter. In 2012-2013 we experienced only a small growth in membership.

PWD ACT's Website

The PWD ACT website is regularly updated with Newsletters, PWD ACT activities, submissions and NDIS news. Amanda Plowright from SHOUT is currently developing the face of our website to make it more attractive and interactive which was recommended by the Review Panel. We are looking at developing, and promoting our facebook page to make it more effective.

PWD ACT has changed its website host from Focus Web Design to CASE. We thank Focus Web Design for its support and thank Amanda from the SHOUT Office for helping us move the Website to CASE and for developing the website. CASE is a community organisation with strong links to the SHOUT Office and we are benefiting from the increased support they provide.

Regular Meetings with Stakeholders

PWD ACT has attended the quarterly information forums conducted by Disability ACT during the reporting period. At these forums, PWD ACT provides input arising from the lived experience of disability and with a disability rights perspective in a forum which is numerically dominated by service providers. In this forum we work closely with the other ACT consumer and advocacy organisations to influence the discussions to outcomes which provide greater benefit to people with disabilities.

In addition to these forums, PWD ACT meets separately with Disability ACT every three months. At these meetings we hear from Disability ACT about its programs and policies, and how they relate to programs and policies of other ACT Government agencies. PWD ACT uses these meetings to raise issues of concern to our members. This has included the approach to NDIS implementation and the progress of the Strategy for the employment of people with disabilities in the ACT Public Service.

PWD ACT places importance on working collaboratively with consumer and advocacy organisations. One of the ways we do this is through the regular two monthly meetings of the ACT Disability Advocacy Network (ACTDAN.) ACTDAN is a forum for ACT consumer and advocacy organisations to come together to exchange information and collaborate on matters of common concern. ACTDAN has no formal status and is not a funded body. Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) provides the secretariat support necessary for us to meet and work together. An example of that close working relationship is our ability to share representation on some Committees. In this reporting period, Margo Hodge represented both PWD ACT and Women With Disabilities on the Committee Reviewing Canberra's Accessible Transport Action Plan. Another example is Sue Salthouse representing both PWD ACT and Women With Disabilities ACT at a roundtable consultation on Canberra as a Digital Economy in the next 100 years.

PWD ACT continues to be a member of the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA), and is applying for membership of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. PWD ACT is also a member of the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS.) and the ACTCOSS Peak Body forum. PWD ACT has contributed to a number of ACTCOSS submissions providing a disability perspective on a number of issues. In particular we contributed to submissions in relation to:

- The 2014-2015 ACT Budget;

- ACT Government Housing Policy; and
- The re-establishment of Citizen Advocacy services in the ACT.

PWD ACT also made its own submission to some of these consultations. PWD ACT policy submissions are available on our website.

Employment of People with Disabilities in the ACT Public Service

This is an issue on which PWD ACT continues to monitor the ACT Government's performance. In response to our own report 'Making Diversity Work' which was launched in December 2009, the ACT Government launched its Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities in March 2011. However, since that launch, the momentum has slowed to a crawl and the lack of progress in this important aspect of social policy is a major concern. In late 2012, PWD ACT and other ACTDAN members met with Andrew Kefford of the Chief Minister's Department to discuss how this Strategy could be revived. The Employment Strategy is also followed up in our quarterly meetings with Disability ACT.

The Government's Strategy included reporting requirements in which the employment of people with disabilities would be included in the State of the Service Report, an Annual ACT publication. The 2013 Report has just been released: [2012 2013 state of the service report.pdf](#)

We note with disappointment that on page 100 of the Report it shows that as at the 30th of June 2013, the ACT Public service has 384 people with a disability employed. That is 122 people short of the target of 506 people for 30 June 2013 set out in the employment strategy. Further, the report shows that since 30 June 2011, the numbers of people with disabilities employed in the ACT Public Service have only increased by two people from 382 people to 384 people. PWD ACT is very concerned at these statistics. But more than statistics, we are concerned that people with disabilities who want employment in the ACT Public Service are not obtaining employment and that the momentum we worked hard for in the 2009-2011 period has been lost. PWD ACT asks why the ACT Public Service is not providing employment for people with disabilities, and what needs to be done to improve our ACT Public Service performance on this important issue of social justice and inclusion for people with disabilities.

As part of our advocacy on the implementation of the ACT Launch Site for the NDIS, we will be advocating for the ACT Government to grasp this opportunity to employ people with disabilities to develop and implement the launch site. In addition, the ACT Government should be aware of opportunities where people with disabilities can be employed across the ACT public sector.

Develop Organisational Capability:

Governance

At the AGM in October 2012 the following people were elected to the Management Committee:

President: Terry Millar

Secretary: Sarah Ferguson

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Committee Members: **Juan del la Torre and Sue Carbone**

In September 2013 **David Luck** joined the Committee.

Since March 2012, the Treasurer's responsibilities have been carried out by the Administrative Officer and the Executive Officer under the Committee's supervision.

PWD ACT employs two staff: Robert Altamore as Executive Officer for 20 hours a week, and Maida Kajkic as Administrative Officer for 14 hours a week. The Management Committee meets approximately every six weeks on a Monday afternoon. The Committee has conducted the Association's affairs. The Committee has continued to outsource the payroll function to Amanda Plowright of the SHOUT Office. We thank Amanda for continuing this role to ensure that PWD ACT meets its salary, taxation and superannuation obligations to its employees.

PWD ACT continues to need Committee Members

To continue to function as an organisation, accept and account for our Government funding and properly represent people with disabilities in the ACT. We have welcomed **David Luck** as a new Committee member this year and hope that a number of other people will offer themselves as Committee members at this AGM for the coming year.

In early 2013, PWD ACT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PWD Australia. Under this MO, PWD ACT and PWD Australia share management procedures and policy information and work together on policy issues for people with disabilities in the ACT.

Finances

For this financial year, Maida has done the book keeping for our accounts. The financial Report prepared by the PWD ACT staff was audited by **Lesley Porroj**.

PWD ACT had a surplus for this year. During the 2012-2013 PWD ACT received its recurrent grant from Disability ACT and a grant of \$358 to support PWD ACT member David Heckendorf to attend and present at the Disability Advocacy Network Australia conference in Brisbane in October 2013. David is the speaker at our 2013 Annual General Meeting.

PWD ACT thanks the Southern Cross Club for their grant of \$1,500 and their previous support.

ACT Budget 2014-2-015

PWD ACT has put a short submission to the ACT Government for its 2014-2015 Budget. The main item in our submission was the call for budget initiatives to enable people with disabilities to be active citizens in the ACT community. The concept of active citizenship implies recognition of a person with a disability as a person who has a capacity to make decisions and express views and an ability to participate in and contribute to the community as opposed to a situation of dependence and non-participation. This theme of 'active citizenship' will influence much of our advocacy in the coming years and will be used along with the other foundations of our advocacy which are human rights, non-

discrimination and the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. Matters covered in our budget submission included advocacy for initiatives for training of people with disabilities as consumer representatives on Committees, an access audit of ACT public buildings and initiatives to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Our budget submission will soon be on our website.

Systemic Advocacy Projects:

Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

PWD ACT continues to work with the other ACT consumer and advocacy organisations and a number of individuals who have a particular interest and expertise on this matter. We have had almost 10 months of WATS Centralised Booking Service. PWD ACT has continuously sought feedback on the effectiveness of this service but little feedback has come our way. However, we do not believe that this lack of feedback means that all is well with WATS taxis. We will continue to actively advocate on this issue.

PWD ACT welcomes the recent commencement of the Smart Card to replace the printed paper vouchers as the means of administering the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. PWD ACT has been advocating for a Smart Card for the taxi scheme for some time and so are pleased that it has finally be implemented.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

PWD ACT welcomes the ACT Government's agreement to host a launch site for the NDIS. The ACT launch site is of National significance as it is the only launch site at which the NDIS will be implemented across all age groups on a jurisdiction wide basis.

PWD ACT has included information about the implementation of the NDIS, both locally and nationally, in its Newsletters and fortnightly bulletins. In late 2012, PWD ACT co-sponsored with Disability ACT the first series of community information meetings for the Expert Group overseeing the implementation of the ACT trial launch site. PWD ACT also attended and contributed to a community display table for information meetings held by Disability ACT to provide members of the public with information about its Enhanced Service Offer Grants Program. This is a key aspect of the ACT's preparation for the commencement of the NDIS in the ACT on 1 July 2014.

PWD ACT President, Terry Millar is a member of the Disability ACT Working Group on individualised funding. PWD ACT has also responded to numerous media inquiries relating to the NDIS and its implementation in the ACT.

Disability Parking Spaces

PWD ACT continues to advocate for improved provision for disability parking. In late 2012, just before the ACT election, the ACT Assembly and the ACT Disability Services Commissioner produced reports on disability parking. PWD ACT's comments on the adverse impact of the changes to the layout of disability parking spaces resulting from the May 2011 amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act Standards

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were quoted extensively in the Commissioner's Report. PWD ACT continues to receive complaints from the public about the layout of the new spaces and continues to field media inquiries about this matter.

PWD ACT continues to receive comments on the enforcement of the law to reserve disability parking spaces for those people who have disability parking permits. PWD ACT continues to advocate for enforcement of parking laws to preserve these spaces for permit holders and also supports a public education campaign to make people aware of the need to preserve those spaces for those who need them. The consequence for a person with a disability of not being able to find a disability parking space can mean that they miss a medical appointment, a job or the simple pleasure of a cup of coffee with a friend. This issue, the perceived reduction in the size and number of disability parking spaces continues to be the most frequent issue being brought to our attention. As an example, during the year, PWD ACT supported employees in Defence in their concerns at the lack of disability parking spaces for workers at the department.

Access to the Environment

PWD ACT continues to advocate for barrier free and universally accessible physical environment. Our activity with respect to disability parking is one aspect of this advocacy. In other submissions relating to our comments on the Government's draft transport policy and on housing, we have highlighted how the inaccessibility of the physical environment prevents people with disabilities from living the ordinary life people take for granted such as going shopping or enjoying an outing with friends.

Sport and Recreation and the Arts

PWD ACT sees participation of people with disabilities in sport and recreation and the arts as important measures of social inclusion.

Transport

PWD ACT continues to be represented by myself on the ACTION Buses Accessible Transport Consultation Committee. Through this Committee PWD ACT works with other disability organisations and individuals to improve ACTION's policies and practices for provision for people with disabilities.

PWD ACT has been able to pursue broader issues relating to transport through the review of the ACT Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport. Margo Hodge represents PWD ACT on this Committee. In 2012, this Committee undertook an extensive public survey of the transport needs of people with disabilities. PWD ACT promoted this survey to its members and encouraged them to complete it. The Committee is continuing its work and we await its outcomes.

PWD ACT also participated in the consultations for the 2012 Review of the Disability Discrimination Act Standards for Accessible Public Transport by attending the Canberra meeting and providing a written submission. At the consultations, in common with other disability organisations, PWD ACT acknowledged improvements, as well as highlighted areas where there has been little or no

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improvement, or regression. Such as the unsatisfactory access outcomes of redevelopment of transport infrastructure, an example being the Belconnen Bus Interchange.

ACT Equipment Scheme

PWD ACT continues to be represented on this Committee and to advocate for improved provision of equipment under this Scheme.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

PWD ACT made two submissions in relation to levels of service provided by Government Agencies. We joined with other community organisations to raise concerns about the Commonwealth Government's actions in amalgamating Medicare and Centrelink services and closing a Centrelink Office in Lanyon and a Medicare office in Civic. In letters to all four Federal Members, PWD ACT drew attention to the disproportionate impact of these closures on people with disabilities. PWD ACT also provided information for an article in the Chronicle by Senator Humphries and printed the response to our letter by Dr Leigh in our Newsletter. However, the Government has not reversed these decisions.

The other service matter we raised was the long waiting times experienced by people calling the ACT Government at Canberra Connect on its central number 132 281. We pointed out that many people with disabilities only have prepaid mobile phones and the long waiting times use up their limited credit. The Officer responsible for the ACT Government Call Centre explained that more staff were being engaged. He suggested people avoid peak times such as at the start and end of the working day. However, PWD ACT feels this response inadequate and will be taking up this matter again.

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

PWD ACT uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities to promote the progressive improvement of services and facilities for people with disabilities and to promote awareness of them and their rights. PWD ACT includes references to the Convention and to individual Convention Articles in its written and personal presentations to government where they are appropriate.

In 2013, PWD ACT member David Heckendorf was a member of the Australian Non-Government Organisations Delegation which presented Australia's Shadow Report to the Monitoring Committee for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities. David is our speaker at our AGM.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the support I have received from individual committee members and their spouses. I commend Maida Kajkic for her work and commitment to our organisation. I also thank our organisational members for their support throughout the year. I believe PWD ACT has an important role to play in Canberra's disability sector as the only organisation in Canberra which is conducted by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. We bring the lived experience of disability as a unique perspective to our advocacy and information sharing activities and I hope we will continue to do this for many years to come.

Robert Altamore OAM CM | Executive Officer