

# **People With Disabilities ACT Inc**

## **Annual Report 2014**

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Prepared by: Robert Altamore OAM, 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, Disability ACT.**



## **PWD ACT Inc Annual Report 2014**

This Report covers the advocacy activities of People With Disabilities ACT Inc from November 2013 to November 2014 and the Association's financial transactions for the 2013-2014 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.

### **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 2013 AGM. This was attended by 12 people. Following the AGM we had a presentation from David Heckendorf. David is a member of PWD ACT and was selected to be a member of the Australian NGO delegation to the July 2013 session of the UN Monitoring Committee for the International Convention on the Rights of People With Disabilities. David gave an interesting and inspiring talk about his experience as an Australian NGO delegate to this important world forum.

For the 2013 International Day of People with Disability, PWD ACT encouraged its members to participate at a special 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 2013-2014, 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 face Book page has been established and linked to the website. However, progress in the development of the website has stalled and the stalling of the development of our website is an issue which I and the Committee need to address urgently in 2015.

### Regular Meetings with Stakeholders

People With Disabilities ACT continues to meet regularly with its stakeholders. PWD ACT meets quarterly with staff of Disability ACT to exchange information and discuss current issues and proposed actions.

PWD ACT attends the quarterly forums conducted by Disability ACT. PWD ACT also attends meetings of the ACT Disability Advocacy Network (ACTDAN) to exchange information and work collaboratively on issues of common concern.

People With Disabilities ACT is a member of the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA), the peak body for disability advocacy. PWD ACT 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 that organisation's representative and advocacy work. PWD ACT is a member of ACT Council of Social Services and seeks to bring a disability rights perspective to ACTCOSS submissions and consultations. An example is our contribution to ACTCOSS's 2015 budget submission in which PWD ACT made the point that housing has to be accessible as well as affordable.

PWD ACT has also forged closer links with the ACT Council on the Ageing ACTCOTA 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.

### Employment of People with Disabilities

PWD ACT joined with other disability organisations in highlighting the poor performance of the ACT Government as an employer of people with disabilities as highlighted by the statistics in the **2014 State of the Service Report**. The ACT Government's poor performance in this important area and the difficulties confronting people with disabilities in getting and keeping a job in the ACT Public Service were highlighted in two Canberra Times articles by Ben Westcott.

[Disabled, indigenous advocates furious as government misses employment targets again9-10ng3y.html](#)

[www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/act-public-service-falling-behind-on-employment-targets-for-people-with-disabilities-and-aborigines-20140530-zrmrw.html](http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/act-public-service-falling-behind-on-employment-targets-for-people-with-disabilities-and-aborigines-20140530-zrmrw.html)

PWD ACT contributed an article on employment for people with disabilities to the Spring edition of the ACTCOSS Newsletter. In this article, we repeated our previous calls for an enquiry by the ACT Legislative Assembly into the employment of people with disabilities in the ACT. The employment issue has been highlighted in a number of other forums. PWD ACT believes that one of the functions which such an enquiry could usefully perform 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:

<b>President</b>	Terry Millar
<b>Vice-President</b>	David Luck
<b>Secretary</b>	Sarah Ferguson;
<b>Committee members:</b>	Juan de la Torre, Sue Carbone and Gian Wilde

PWD ACT employs two staff: Robert Altamore Executive Officer (20 hours per week) and Maida Kajkic Administrative Officer (14 hours per week).

The Committee has conducted the Association's affairs and has continued to outsource the payroll function to Amanda Plowright of the SHOUT Office. We thank Amanda for continuing in this roll to ensure that PWD ACT meets its salary, superannuation and taxation obligations to its employees.

PWD ACT has taken up opportunities provided by Disability ACT to prepare for the NDIS. PWD ACT completed the NDIS tool kit to learn what we had to do to be ready for the NDIS. However, that tool kit was of limited value to PWD ACT as it was geared to the needs of service providers and not helpful to PWD ACT which undertakes collective systemic advocacy and provides peer support and information to its members.

PWD ACT also applied to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for recognition as a Disability Organisation under the NDIS. This application was unsuccessful.

PWD ACT was audited by Disability ACT for compliance with its funding agreement. While PWD ACT was found to be generally compliant with its funding agreement the audit report drew attention to the following matters requiring action by PWD ACT:-

- Annual Project to build evidence base of needs of people with disabilities – see below;
- PWD ACT needs to have a formal complaints policy – this is being developed;
- PWD ACT needs to get its reports in on time – we will endeavor to do this; and
- PWD ACT staff needs to have Working with Vulnerable People checks and cards – this has been done.

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 incurred a deficit for this year. PWD ACT received its annual operating grant from Disability ACT and a separate grant under the ACT Government Scheme. 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.

### Annual Project

PWD ACT was unable to maintain a project which acts to build an evidence base about the relevant needs of people with disabilities in the ACT. However, PWD ACT in its written submissions and in its meetings with Disability ACT, directed attention to the relevant needs of people with disabilities. In particular PWD ACT, through its systemic advocacy highlighted evidence of need in areas including housing, transport, employment, leadership training, disability parking and environmental access.

As PWD ACT has been unable to conduct this project for several years, the audit of its compliance with the funding agreement required PWD ACT to undertake the project or negotiate an alternative output. PWD ACT and Disability ACT are trying to get a date for a meeting to re-negotiate this aspect of the Funding Agreement and is awaiting a response.

### Systemic Advocacy Projects

#### WATS Services

PWD ACT continues to work with members of ACTDAN on this matter and to monitor *Wheelchair Accessible Taxis* services. PWD ACT expresses its concern that the Government has just renewed the contract for the WATS Centralised Booking Service without any consultation with disability organisations. This is a broken promise as PWD ACT and other disability organisations were assured that they would be consulted before the contract was renewed. The value of this contract is approximately one million dollars.

The recently announced increases to the maximum subsidy levels for the *Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS)* are welcome. However, PWD ACT points out that these increases are overdue catch ups as the maximum subsidy levels were last increased in 2011.

PWD ACT also welcomes the replacement of the paper vouchers with smart cards. There were a number of teething troubles with the introduction of the Smart Cards with holders having their cards rejected but these were resolved.

### 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 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 also fielded media inquiries on these matters.

### **Access to the Environment**

PWD ACT will make access to the environment its priority issue in 2014-2015. PWD ACT held a meeting of its Organisational Members at which it was agreed that PWD ACT should run a major campaign on environmental access issues in the ACT to highlight inaccessible environments and buildings. The aim of this campaign would seek to establish a committee similar to the former Access and Planning Advisory Committee (AAPAC) which had a brief to consider and make recommendations on major new development applications to ensure that the approved development would be accessible for people with disabilities. 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.

PWD ACT has continued to advocate for improved provisions for disability parking. The need for improved provision for disability parking was mentioned in our comments on the ACT Government's draft transport Policy. PWD ACT continues to be contacted by the media on the availability of disability parking spaces and the enforcement of those spaces.

PWD ACT is also participating in community consultation for the design of the City Gungahlin Light Rail and the new Canberra Hospital.

### **Education**

PWD ACT continues to monitor the access of students with disabilities to education. No matters have been brought to us. However, we are aware of education access issues being dealt with as individual advocacy matters by other ACT individual advocacy providers.

### **ACT Equipment Scheme**

This Scheme is likely to be subsumed into the NDIS. PWD ACT will continue to advocate together with other National advocacy organisations for an approach to the funding of equipment for people with disabilities which is flexible and person centered.

### **ACTION Buses Consultative Committee**

PWD ACT continues to be represented on this Committee and to contribute to its work in developing policies for provision for people with disabilities by the ACTION Bus network. PWD ACT welcomes the roll out of provision of accessible real time information and on board announcements of bus stops for people with disabilities. However, we are concerned that the provision of on-board announcements 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 Transport Project for Older Canberrans**

EO represents PWD ACT on the COTA ACT Steering Committee for its Transport Project for Older Canberrans. PWD ACT contributed comments on the resource kit produced by this project and has publicized through its network the joint project of COTA ACT and NICAN to pair older people with volunteers to help them develop their skills in using Canberra's public transport.

### **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**

People With Disabilities ACT continues to refer to 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 is making use of those Policy Statements in its systemic advocacy submissions.

### **Other Matters**

In addition to the measures and projects described above and which are recorded in the PWD ACT Business Plan for 2010-2014, PWD ACT has been involved in other activities during the 12 month reporting period which raised awareness of issues impacting on people with disabilities and which involved our advocacy for an inclusive community. These included the following matters:

PWD ACT contributed to the **Canberra Centenary Time Capsule** a copy of its 2004 publication, "**Leap Out**" featuring an anthology of short stories and poems written by authors with disabilities; and

PWD ACT is a participant in the **Council on the Ageing ACT** Roundtable discussions on making Canberra an age friendly city on the basis that many age friendly initiatives also address access and participation needs of people with disabilities.