Focus on housing
Accessibility, affordability, independence, exploring models for home ownership

Inside: NDIS update in Canberra • Symbiotic City planning developers and government • An inclusive Canberra business • Clickability – Rate and review service providers
Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

LISTENING & LEADING

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Canberra Disability Review

Rachel Sirr, Executive Officer, People with Disabilities ACT

I have recently been appointed as Executive Officer for People with Disabilities. As a newcomer to the organisation and to the sector, I am here to listen, to learn, and to speak up on behalf of People with Disabilities.

In this edition we have a wrap-up of the happenings across Canberra – these are your stories for your city and region.

In Canberra, at least 65,000 people have some form of disability according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. People with disabilities in Canberra are a broad group. One in every three households that have someone with a disability. My personal journey with disabilities has been through my immediate circle, my family and friends who have battled with various things such as: MS, ME/CFS, Cerebral Palsy, Bipolar and Neuropathy. Yet they stand strong despite various disabilities, to bring an incredible contribution – not only to my life, but to the world.

Canberra is a diverse society, especially when compared to other places around the world where I’ve lived and travelled, including the Middle East, North America and Asia. In these places, cities are often not so welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities. Indeed, some of those cities would be very difficult to live for people who are vulnerable or have difficulties to overcome.

By comparison, Canberra is a warm, easy-going, vibrant, and fairly forward-thinking city. But that’s not without its challenges. And indeed, there are still areas where there’s still much more that can be done to make it more inclusive for everyone. Especially in the areas of education, transport, building standards and employment.

Housing and Home ownership

Housing for people with disabilities has been a focus in September, as a range of stakeholders came together for a morning tea hosted by People with Disabilities ACT. Hearing from ACT Housing as well as from leading service provider, Havelock House, people could find out more about options available to them. A great time was had by all to network, connect and learn from Occupational Therapists and learn about the latest developments and opportunities available.

I want to see this Review filled with all of your stories, and issues that affect you. At People with Disabilities ACT Inc, we are guided by our members, who are broad-ranging and cover all kinds of disabilities. So please – any key issues that you would like to see movement on, I encourage you to write to our office at: admin@pwdact.org.au.

I hope you enjoy this edition. I encourage you to pass it around to family and friends. And by all means, please do submit your own stories and articles for future editions.

Regards,
Rachel

You’re invited to join People with Disabilities ACT, the peak voice in Canberra since 1982.

Membership is free for individuals.

Join today and help have a stronger voice for people with disabilities in Canberra.

Visit pwdact.org.au
Canberra’s NDIS participation rate – update on service

PWD ACT Opinion piece

It may come as a surprise that Canberrans have up until recently been leaving the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) at triple the national average. While it seems to have picked up in recent weeks, the Canberra participation rate has traditionally trended downward in contrast to the NDIA saying that it is ‘gaining momentum’.

Some 6,000 Canberrans are currently on an NDIS approved plan. We were the first jurisdiction to come on board.

People with disabilities have actually been hospitalised by the stress of having to prove their disability to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). It seems that some people with disabilities applying for reviews have had a tumultuous time. There were stories of people being forced through courts, and also left on hold to call centres for hours on end.

At the ACT parliamentary committee held earlier this year in May, 70 organisations made submissions to the inquiry. The ACT’s Disability Reference Group provided these stories.

Why is this? There has been a correlation between the level of service provided.

The NDIA have clearly good intentions, and have said (following their satisfaction survey) that “further improvement work is underway to ensure a quality and consistent experience for people with disabilities and providers.” Participant satisfaction had increased this quarter – by four per cent.

Commitment to improvement, National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) CEO Mr Luca said, meant the results of the (satisfaction) survey are very encouraging, however, there is still room for improvement and we continue to work on a number of initiatives to further enhance the experience”.

While the NDIA are obviously trying, it just isn’t at the level that it needs to be. Setting up a new account takes at least half an hour – but that’s just the start. There needs to be an Evidence of Disability form, and a visit to a GP. It actually takes three months or more to set up. Then – if it is rejected, you can go for a review.

A large number of children were exiting the scheme in 2017, according to the NDIA’s latest quarterly report. This means these children are not getting crucial interventions prescribed by doctors, as delays in some cases stretched beyond treatment timeframes.
The Commonwealth Ombudsman reported a back-log of more than 8,000 people still waiting to have their support plan reviewed back in February. Some had been waiting more than nine months and the agency receives about 620 new requests for review each week, the report said.

While the agency is currently piloting a new, improved “pathway program in Victoria”, most of the issues raised by the Committee had been a problem for a number of years.

It appears it’s a problem with the system. It’s slow and it’s clunky. To overcome this, the NDIA are trying to give people with disabilities more ‘self-management’ tools. And yet even more information.

Should we not look at another part of the problem which is very possibly within the NDIA itself? The potential silos. The top-heavy management culture. We can speculate on under-resourcing at the customer-service end. Slow, second-rate computers and inadequate bandwidth. As well, the overly complex ways of assessing people’s cases which intend to ‘catch-out’ the ‘fakers’. The majority of people with true and life-impacting disabilities are still having to go through the ringer just to make their case legitimised.

Perhaps the NDIA should look to the Australian Tax Office for forward-thinking ways of improvements to the system? The ATO have implemented an ‘opt-in’ tax return. A ground-breaking way to manage the collection of the public tax dollars in Australia. They recognised merit in the fact that most people were telling the truth when it came to reporting their income and expenses. Therefore, by putting the system more into the hands of the people, they could put more resources into services and less into enforcement, and a smoother organisation and system.

The NDIA recently hosted a webinar to talk about self-management, to give participants, families and carers – to explain how it works and the benefits – from families and people who are self-managing their NDIS plan.

Also, in an age of information overload, the NDIA have created two new brochures. The purpose was “to provide clear and more detailed information to help people understand and navigate the NDIS”.

One can only hope these will help some people, yet what comes to mind is that simplicity is, after all, an engineered process. Less might in fact be more.

The booklets are available online – https://www.ndis.gov.au/people-disability/fact-sheets-and-publications as well as NDIS shopfronts

- 212 Northbourne Ave Braddon
- DHS cnr Anketell and Sheerin Street, Greenway
- ACT Early Childhood Early Intervention, 26 Weingarth Street, Holder
- Early Childhood Early Intervention, 26 Weingarth Street, Holder
- Local area coordinator Partner/Feros Care ACT, 6 Shea Street, Phillip
Home-ownership for people with disabilities

PWDACT Opinion piece

Affordable housing for people with disabilities continues to be a topic that remains front of mind for many. Where will I live when I leave my parent’s house? How will I afford it? Will it be comfortable? What about maintaining my level of independence?
Obvioulsy, People with Disabilities ACT advocates for inclusive housing models, and we do not advocate for institutional models.

Indeed - it is a hugely empowering opportunity for people with disabilities to own their own home. Shared ownership models for people with disabilities are still considered complex products not well understood by consumers, lenders and policy-makers.

It’s complex, and on a national level needs to be considered.

For Canberrans wanting to purchase a house, it’s likely to cost more than five times the average annual average household income.

The ACT could potentially be front-runners in this area. In Canberra, people with disabilities would like to own their own home, but many may not be able afford to purchase one on their own. Given the latest housing figures Canberra’s median house price was $620,000 at the time of the ABS Census in 2016. The median price for an “attached property” - units, apartments and townhouses - was $435,000.

And, therefore, new ways of addressing barriers to home ownership for people with disabilities is important.

It’s an obviously complex topic, with many aspects to be drawn into consideration.

In Canberra, housing for ten people with intellectual disability officially opened in Harrison in 2016. The new property is part of Project Independence which offered the opportunity of home ownership for those who may not have been able to afford it.

This should not be 'new' and is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to how people with disabilities could plan for their future home ownership.

Schemes such as Project Independence exist in various forms around the country. But a more intentional approach should be taken up by governments, to help more people with disabilities into affordable home-ownership all across Australia.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) report released into shared home ownership in 2017 recommended that “shared equity” and “mixed equity models” could help address unmet need in affordable housing and barriers in entry to home ownership for people with disability.

Shared ownership has potential benefits. There’s more housing choice, greater security of tenure and of course - that sense of ownership. Capital investment by people with disability and their families into shared ownership would help reduce the overall cost of housing assistance required by government to overcome the supply gap.

At the same time, there are risks to consider. For example, some models of shared ownership could mean people with disabilities could be exposed to the risks of debt in particular, people with low income. There are other real barriers to finance home purchase such as legal capacity for people with cognitive disability. Then there may not be willingness or capacity of families of some people with disability to help with the capital investment needed to enter shared ownership.

The other added benefit is these would actually help to relieve pressure on social housing tenancies for higher need applicants. The following shared ownership models were proposed by AHURI:

1. A shared equity model

This would target people with disability with moderate household incomes, who could afford the combined ongoing costs of mortgage repayments and property ownership outgoings. This model could work for people with disability who have secure moderate incomes, but are currently living in the private and social rental sectors. The aim would be to help transition people from insecure private rental to full or part home ownership.

2. A restricted resale shared equity model

Similar to the model above, however this would have resale restrictions on the price and conditions of the property to preserve affordability for future generations of shared owners. This model involves the community and community organisations, who manage the ongoing process. It would still have risks attached to this model such as debt.

3. An individual mixed equity model

This would work for people with disability on low income but moderate assets, including their own savings and funds gifted by family members. Shared owners would make a capital contribution for the purchase of a property, but would not be named on the title and live under lease conditions that resemble those in social housing. This model combines the advantages of social housing with those of home ownership: affordability, choice, security of tenure and sense of ownership.

4. A group mixed equity model

This is where relatively small equity contributions from several co-residents are combined with public funding.

Group housing models can be problematic for people with disability, regardless of equity mixing or sharing, and new group mixed equity models would require innovations to ensure choice and control for shared owners (e.g. choosing their co-residents; control over their privacy and space; clear rules and pathways for shared owners leaving or joining).

Ways forward

To make it happen is not altogether an easy process. In view of getting more people with disabilities into their own homes, it will take clear thinking on behalf of governments and leadership from the sector.

Reviews are needed of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), the First Home Owner Grant and NDIS funds. A review of housing stamp duty at the State and Territory level. It would need Special Disability Trust and review pension eligibility rules to unlock housing wealth and gifting of funds by families of people with disability.

The reviews should identify what can people with disabilities expect income-wise from these streams. Then, give opportunity and remove barriers to spend that money in regards to housing and owning their home under a shared ownership scheme.

To scale it up, a more comprehensive housing policy framework is needed. The framework must be straightforward and plain-language, and clarify what the government’s housing assistance products are, and then allocate public funding accordingly.

The AHURI report recommended establishing government-backed agencies to offer affordable and inclusive finance. These are already being offered by Keystart (Western Australia) and HomeStart (South Australia). We need them across the nation.
The ACT Government emphasizes housing affordability as a key policy priority. It is only right that a Government should do this.

People with Disabilities ACT (PWDACT) has actively participated in the intensive program of community consultations leading up to the development and announcement of the Government’s affordable housing initiatives. PWDACT has welcomed and supported these initiatives.

PWDACT members have told us at our morning tea held in April 2018 that housing affordability is a real issue for them. We know this from the anecdotal evidence of our members and the local and national research. An example is a recent housing snapshot taken by an ACT welfare organisation which indicated that at the time of the snapshot, there was no rental property which was both affordable and accessible.

National research repeatedly shows that social measures relating to housing affordability such as education, employment and income are measures in which people with disabilities experience disproportionate social disadvantage.

In our participation in the ACT Government consultations around affordable housing, PWDACT has had one simple message. It is not enough that housing is affordable, housing must be accessible. An affordable house is of no help if you can’t get through the front door, use the kitchen or bathroom or host visitors in the lounge room.

The ACT Government is taking initiatives to increase the stock of accessible housing available to the community. But it can do more. Some of the things the ACT Government could do are:

• make allocations from its Housing Innovations fund for initiatives which will increase the stock of accessible housing in the ACT;
• hold a roundtable on accessible housing to bring Government, private developers and people with disabilities together to generate initiatives to promote housing accessibility in the ACT;
• take regulatory measures to promote the provision of accessible housing;
• having set the example, the ACT should take strong positions in Commonwealth State Ministerial Discussions in support of National regulatory measures to promote housing which is accessible, livable and visitable in accordance with National Guidelines.

The 2018–19 ACT Budget was handed down in June this year. In doing so, the ACT Government said they believed in the “full inclusion and participation of people with disability, and are working hard to make this a reality”. A snapshot of this budget-in-brief is provided below.

The ACT has led the nation in rolling out the NDIS and progressing objectives of the National Disability Strategy, with more than 6,000 Canberrans supported by the scheme and $650 million contribution to the NDIS over four years.

In the most recent budget-in-brief, the ACT Government said disability funding will grow by 9.3% a year on average.1

And now, the ACT Government has started inviting stakeholders to share their views to inform priorities for investment in services and infrastructure for the 2019–20 ACT Budget.

As in previous years, People with Disabilities ACT will make a written submission to the budget consultation. This will be informed by our continuing stakeholder consultations with our members and peak bodies. We value your input – so please send your views to projects@pwdact.org.au.

Growing the Disability Inclusion Grants program

The ACT government has committed to expand the Disability Inclusion Grants program to support community groups, organisations and small businesses to become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability.

The annual ACT Chief Minister’s Inclusion Awards continue, and are hugely important to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of businesses, organisations and individuals that have demonstrated their commitment to encourage, welcome and support people with disability in their workplace, business and community. Also, the Connect & Participate Expo is happening again to help break down barriers to participation.
In nature, a symbiotic relationship can benefit both species (e.g. egrets that eat insects affecting cattle), or one species, or the “relationship” can be parasitic. While some observers might claim that ‘symbiosis’ is an unfair comparison for property developers and government, in any jurisdiction, it’s not wholly misplaced.

Cities need housing. This provides developers and opportunity to bid for property development projects. Governments (whether local, State or Territory) are expected to manage the competition for such demand competitively, so the jurisdiction gets several things:

- the best price for the land
- funds to cover “headworks” (connecting roads, infrastructure and utilities)
- funds which can help reduce the cost of other services, e.g. garbage collection.

If the jurisdiction manages these competing demands well, it can help minimise rate increases, which can be a political liability come election time. However, there are two ends to this “symbiotic spectrum”, one where the community doesn’t feel it’s being gouged to cover government costs and the other end, where politicians are seen, or accused of being, in the pockets of developers.

Canberra prides itself as a “planned city” based on the creativity and artistry of American architect Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion. But while the intent of Griffin’s design may be reflected in the design of the inner city precincts, some of the more recent decisions, or plans, in other areas show a greater desire for a “quick fix” than planning.

For example, take the construction of many roundabouts in new suburbs such as Wright and Coombs. While blind Freddy can see that several of these will take increasingly heavy traffic, they have been built as single lane roundabouts, not double. Likewise, Canberra should ensure the abutments for any bridge are built to allow duplication.

According to Access Canberra, Canberrans can’t park on footpaths or nature strips. Try telling this to residents in several of the new Gungahlin suburbs, where the roads are intentionally narrow – so narrow that if cars park on the roadway opposite each other there can be insufficient room to drive between them. I’ll bet dollars to donuts that residents or visitors park half-on the nature strip.

Two examples of slow city planning. First, some context. When I first moved to Canberra in 1989, the Tuggeranong Hyperdome had just been completed and much of the surrounding land was still grazing land. There was virtually no motel accommodation in Woden or Tuggeranong. There were no suburbs further south and Gungahlin also didn’t exist. This makes it easier to grasp the level of growth Canberra has seen. Sadly, road improvements tend to be driven by injury and fatality statistics than planning.

In all that time, the Cotter Road remained unduplicated until just recently. Now, finally, with the expansion of Weston Creek, Wright and Coombs it was finally clear that a second-class, single-lane Cotter Road was unacceptable.

But there’s still at least one southside arterial anomaly. Athlon Drive is two lanes from Tuggeranong to Drakeford Drive, then single lane from there to Sulwood Drive, where it is again two lanes onward to Woden. So it is quite puzzling that the ACT government has built a chokepoint with a set of lights when the real (but more costly, long-term) solution
was to provide a pedestrian tunnel or overpass. Of course, one of the reasons locals have been risking life and limb to cross a frenetic Athllon Drive is that the “local shop” in Livingstone Avenue has been boarded up for at least five years – so locals had no choice but to cross to Wanniassa.

Again, blind Freddy can see that a comprehensive solution is needed to duplicate the road AND allow safe pedestrian access, particularly as it is likely that Athllon Drive will be the spine along which any light rail corridor is extended. Building light rail without incorporating a road duplication would be absurd.

I often think of Joni Mitchell singing “Big Yellow Taxi” when I think about development, and the repeated lyric “Don’t it always seem to go; That you don’t know what you’ve got til it’s gone; They paved paradise; And put up a parking lot”.

In early September, The Canberra Times carried a front page article about a fruiterer/mixed business in Mawson stating that government plans to expand the Mawson shopping precinct and introduce another major shopping chain would be the death of their business. Bigger isn’t always better, if it means changing the viability of “neighbourhood shopping”. But the strongest argument against expanding the Mawson shopping precinct is that it’s already exceeding the available parking, especially for disabled drivers.

The same could be said for Cooleman Court at Weston Creek, and likely to worsen as Wright and Coombs fill up. More modest (“neighbourhood”) shopping centres tend to be more accessible for people with a disability. To use southside examples, Erindale, Mawson and Cooleman Court (rated in increasing difficulty of parking). The Hyperdome is an exercise in torture if you’re disabled. All parking is a long way from most of the shops. There is almost no disability parking in Anketell Street if you want a restaurant meal. And while the Hyperdome does have some free motorised scooters for shoppers with a disability, the Reception is a long way from any parking.

Try and keep tabs on any proposed redevelopments in your suburb or favourite shopping areas. Don’t let anyone pave your piece of paradise, when you could have signed a petition or added your voice to prevent a change you don’t want. There are also regional councils in the ACT which are great venues for highlighting community issues.
Employers are often on the hunt for ways to make their workplace more inclusive and diverse. The Inclusion in Employment project aims to do just that – by finding jobs for people with disabilities.

People with Disabilities ACT has argued that by placing certain people with disabilities, it is a Win-Win situation. For example, there may be jobs that are largely repetitive that those without disabilities may not necessarily enjoy. However, some people with disabilities actually enjoy the routine offered by an apparently repetitive job.

The Canberra Business Chamber, ACT Government and ACT Inclusion Council have joined forces to help businesses who’ve employed someone with disability, to share their experiences with businesses who could benefit from doing the same.

One of the key drivers behind the Inclusion in Employment project is Cam Sullings – whose voice you would’ve no doubt heard on the radio.

In his full-time job at the Canberra Business Chamber, Cam organises Peer to Peer information sessions, which help connect businesses and give people a greater understanding of employing a person with disability.
EMPLOYMENT UPDATE IN THE ACT

The goal is to place 10 people with disability into 10 jobs and show businesses it can be done, with several benefits.

So far, the sessions have been well received, attracting 50 to 60 people on each occasion.

Cam says he hopes the project will help break the negative stigma around employing people with disability.

“An inclusive workplace

is a reflection on our changing community.

Many businesses realise their customer base is not just healthy, middle aged people. They say it’s important to them that their team mirrors the people walking through their door.”

There’s been multiple success stories come out of the Inclusion in Employment project – including one involving 18-year-old Alanah, who was employed as an Events Assistant at the National Convention Centre.

Alanah’s employment came about after information was gathered and exchanged at the second Peer to Peer information session.

Alanah’s mum wrote a letter, expressing her gratitude for all those who helped make it happen.

“The Personnel Group changes lives,” she said. “My girl said to me last night that while she’s still anxious about starting a job and working with people, she knows she can talk to Pilar [at the Personnel Group], and Pilar will support her through it.”

“That is so well managed. I know it will be okay. And that’s why I got a bit emotional – to hear that from my girl is such a change from where she’s been for so long.”

CBC Business Development Manager, Cam Sullings
As the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continues to gather pace, we’re seeing greater choice and control for people with disability; and we love it! But in tandem with these principles, we need to ensure people have the means to achieve them. For example, how do we connect people so that they have the resources to make informed decisions and choices?

This is where Clickability comes in. We’ve been busily working in the ACT for over a year now, helping increase access to high quality, relevant and easy-to-understand information. This includes blog posts and other resources, as well as our Australian-first online service directory for people with disability in ACT.

“These reviews make the whole process far more transparent, as everyone can see what’s good and bad, or slightly in-between. Suddenly, your choice is meaningful – and if your choice is meaningful, you’ve got greater control. ”

Simply, our directory allows people with disability to rate and review services. Because, truthfully, who knows the services better than the people who actually use them? Others can then search for services in their area, check out the reviews, and make an informed choice about which service provider they want to go with under the NDIS.

These reviews make the whole process far more transparent, as everyone can see what’s good and bad, or slightly in-between.

Suddenly, your choice is meaningful – and if your choice is meaningful, you’ve got greater control.

How do I review?

So, how can you get the most out of the process? How can we remain anonymous if we want to or review critically if we need something changed? If you wish to remain anonymous, you’ll need to ensure you don’t have any identifiable info; here’s how you do it:

Find a secret name. Obviously, if you wish to remain anonymous, the first step when reviewing on Clickability is to choose a name other than your own – and to choose one that obviously excludes any reference to your pets, hobbies, or other identifiable info.

Remove identifiable info from your review. Creating a random name is one thing, but you also need to ensure your review itself has no identifiable info. For instance, avoid mentioning how long you’ve been using a service for or where you used the service.
Watch where you share. The other important facet is, after reviewing, watch where you share any content that might lead people to your review. That’s not to say you shouldn’t encourage others to review!

Because you might be anonymous, it doesn’t mean you shirk any responsibility to be truthful though!

Here’s our top tips for reviewing on our site

Be clear
Be detailed
Use a real world example
Make a suggestion about how to improve a service

You should also avoid the following:

Swearing or irrelevant information
Experiences that didn’t happen to you
Reviews that aren’t true
Reviews about your own organisation
Reviews intended to harm competitors

The other important aspect these reviews not only help other people with disability but also the service provider itself. This might strike you as weird. However, with genuine, constructive feedback, services can actively engage their users in helping improve and better their service.

What else can I access?

As we stated, Clickability also offers a host of other resources, beyond what people review on our site. The first is a four-part series about the “Power of Choice”, where speakers from ADACAS, HireUp, Clickability and PWDACT share their knowledge of rights and advocacy in the disability sector.

These helpful videos explore consumer rights and responsibilities, individual advocacy and supported decision making, rights and responsibilities of services, and systemic advocacy and standing up for your rights. Check them out for a handy insight into how choice can be achieved under the NDIS.

We also had creative writer Megan Kelly explore Canberra highlights, Manuka, and Canberra cafes in an ongoing blog series that reveals how to easily navigate Canberra if you have a disability, for residents and holidayers alike.

We also partnered with Hireup, who discussed how the majority of people in ACT are self-managing, and that it’s successful and easy when done correctly. Their blog ‘Self Management: The final piece of the NDIS puzzle’ can be read on our website and shows just how manageable the process can be.

We also have an insightful blog from Feros Care, an ACT Local Area Coordinator (LAC), who explain everything that LACs do to help you during your NDIS transition and journey, including all the details you need for pre-planning.

We also produce our own helpful guides, unravelling the world of daily living and access, therapy and assessment, and plan management, with links to providers and other resources. Consider it a one-stop shop.

Where next?

If you have any questions, email us at hello@clickability.com.au and don’t forget to review a service! It takes two minutes, if that, and will help others in the ACT choose their perfect service provider.
ACT organisations win grants to make services more inclusive for people with disabilities

By Ian Bushnell

An Indigenous justice group, breastfeeding association and an arts centre are among 15 recipients of Disability Inclusion Grants worth $100,000 announced by the ACT Government on Wednesday (12 September).

The grants will support the 15 organisations with projects to make their services and activities more accessible for people with disability.

The successful projects aim to reduce barriers to arts and sports, legal, medical and community services and recreational activities for people with disability.

The grant recipients are:

- Holt Medical Centre, to modify the entrance to make it accessible for patients with disabilities;
- Holder Family Practice and Isabella Plains Medical Centre, to install height adjustable beds;
- Tjillari Justice, to adapt justice resources into Easy English for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability;
- Australian Breastfeeding Association ACT, to increase access for women with disability, or parents of an infant with disability, to breastfeeding resources and specialised support;
- Ginninderra Athletics Club, to make their Early Years program more inclusive for children of all abilities;
- Canberra Community Law, to install a hearing loop at the Community Legal Centre Hub;
- Canberra Glassworks, to improve the accessibility of their studio space;
- ACT Council of Social Service, to install a self-opening door, for independent access through the main entry of the Weston Community Hub;
- Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centre, to develop disability action plans among their resident arts organisations;
- Astral Float Studio, to complete Australia’s first fully accessible float studio;
- Canberra Miniature Railway, to construct accessible concrete pathways for visitors;
- Cyclabilities, to pilot their innovative program for children with additional needs in a school environment; and
- East African Community Association and Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre, to engage in disability awareness and capacity building.

Minister for Disability Rachel Stephen-Smith said 57 applications were received detailing ambitious initiatives that clearly demonstrate the ACT community’s commitment to promoting the inclusion of people with disability.

She said the Government doubled the funding to $100,000 a year in the 2018–19 Budget after the impressive response to the first round of Disability Inclusion Grants in 2017.

“Through this process, we’ve seen a range of innovative and community-driven approaches to reducing barriers to people with disability,” she said.
A
fter winning Silver in 2017 and a Bronze medal at the Ivor Burge Championships this year, five players from the ACT’s Ivor Burge team will head to Melbourne this weekend to take part in the Australian Pearls Camp.

The Pearls are the Australian Women’s Basketball team for players with an Intellectual Disability. Brittany and Taylor Anderson, Louwanna and Tallera Sheridan and Aeysha Williams have been named as part of the 22-strong squad.

With players from all over Australia set to take part in the camp, Head Coach Sarah Skidmore says that the invitation to take part was a great opportunity for the girls.

“To get selected to the Pearls camp the girls had to play quite well at the last Ivor Burge Championships,” said Skidmore. “The girls proved themselves on the court and showed that even though they are kids, they can compete against women.”

Those selected into the final team will get to compete at the 2019 INAS Global Games to be held in Brisbane next October.

The INAS Global Games are the world’s biggest sporting event for athletes with an intellectual impairment and will see athletes from all over the world compete across nine separate sports.

“The Pearls Camp is based on 3×3 because the women play 3×3 internationally and at the INAS Global Games so it will be good for the girls to be exposed to that,” Skidmore said.

Excited about the prospects of the girl’s future, Skidmore will also be looking to use the Camp as an indicator to see where the team is at ahead of the 2019 Ivor Burge Championships which Basketball ACT is co-hosting with Basketball Australia in February.

“We’re co-hosting the Ivor Burge Championships next year which is exciting,” Skidmore said. “I have a good indication of where the team fits in comparison to the competition so we’re looking forward to playing on home turf next year.”

For Skidmore, the opportunity to attend the Camp shows that there is a pathway for athletes with an intellectual disability.
An inclusive Canberra business

Yummy mouthfuls that also help the community

By Branka Prodanovic

Croatian style donuts that create a difference in the community are now available in Canberra thanks to Danijela and the team at Krofne!

You may have come across this small but highly influential donut business at the Old Bus Depot Markets or at the Fyshwick Fresh Food Markets, serving up mouth-watering flavours from Nutella to Salted Caramel to Strawberry Glaze. Loosely translated as ‘donut’ from the Croatian language, Krofne donuts are baked fresh daily from a recipe that has been passed down four generations, landing in the hands of owner, Danijela Vrkic.

But this little Canberran treasure offers so much more than balls of doughy heaven. Krofne is a family-owned and operated business that employs young people with special needs and disabilities across Canberra. For Danijela, Krofne only has one motto:

“We always say, we don’t employ people to bake donuts, we bake donuts to employ people.”

Originally, Krofne started out as a way to secure employment opportunities for Danijela’s son, Anthony, who lives with Down Syndrome. Being in his last year of high school, Danijela says she and her husband were simply concerned for Anthony’s future, so she started baking donuts.

“I started bringing donuts into work, testing whether it would be a product people would actually enjoy and they were walking out the door. So, I thought ‘wow’, let’s just see how far we can do this and then we got our first stint at the Old Bus Depot Markets and that will actually be two years in October.”

Since then, the business has blossomed into a hub of opportunity, employing young people living with Down Syndrome to sell the donuts across multiple locations in Canberra. Danijela says that creating these opportunities for young people living with disabilities by small businesses such as hers is vital in the ACT.

“[They] are so capable and people don’t actually see that... like the only difference with them is that they reach their milestone at a later stage [in life],” she said.

“There are things that they obviously need assistance with but if I didn’t employ one of them I would have to employ a person without a disability regardless, so I’m thinking why not give them the opportunity.”
While Danijela admits that things can get challenging at times, as is the case with any small business, she says she wouldn’t have it any other way and is grateful to the community for offering so much support.

“We are so lucky here in Canberra, we really are... the support that my son gets, the support that I get... the community has just been phenomenal. I can’t even express it.”

Providing employment opportunities for people living with disabilities is how Krofne differentiates itself from other, similar donut businesses in Canberra. That and the fact that Danijela is always trying to improve and innovate her family’s recipe, including introducing a vegan range of donuts that will get any vegan lover lining up for a taste.

“My daughter is actually vegan and we were trying to help her out,” Danijela said. “She’s, like, ‘mum, I can’t eat any of this’ and I said alright, let’s see what I can do.”

After months of research and testing as well as talking to bakers and providers all over Australia, Danijela finally managed to develop not only one, but multiple vegan donuts. She also finds inspiration from her customers, who tell her what flavours they want to see in the donuts.

“Last weekend there were some people that came to the pop-up and I said what would you like to see in the [vegan donuts] and [a woman] said custard! I thought how am I going to do this? I have spent most of this week trying to find something that is suitable for vegan donuts that’s a vegan custard and I found it! I was so excited. Vegan custard donuts from now on!”

With a growing business also comes the demand for expansion, and Danijela says she has been thinking about taking Krofne outside of Canberra to New South Wales and Victoria. However, she wants to manage the sites here first, before she can even think about crossing the border, given the baking team only consist of her and her husband (when she hauls him in).

But regardless of where Krofne will be in the future, Danijela assures that the first priority will always be ‘baking donuts to employ people’.

“We’d like to get Canberra down pat first and then it will always remain a social enterprise so we’ll always employ people with disability, [particularly] with Down Syndrome and other disabilities.”

Anyone interested in getting in touch regarding employment opportunities should contact Danijela directly via hello@krofne.com.au.

To get your hands on these little gems creating a difference in Canberra, visit the permanent stalls at the Niche Markets in Fyshwick on Saturdays and the Old Bus Depot Markets on Sundays. Krofne also travels around Canberra with pop-up stalls at the Hand Made Markets, in Gungahlin, and soon-to-be Queanbeyan and Belconnen. Krofne also provides catering services for business and social functions.
Canberra film-makers win big at Focus on Ability Short Film Festival

By Ian Bushnell

A Canberra film-maker has won a major award at the 10th annual international Focus On Ability Short Film Festival, an initiative of NOVA Employment which focuses on the abilities of people with disability.

Sebastian Chan’s short film Bus Trip won the Judges’ Choice award in the Open Short Film section and Chan received his prize at the gala awards night at The Concourse in Sydney on 5 September. Another Canberra filmmaker, Carl Emmerson, and mentor Daniel Sanguineti won the Best Australian Screenplay award for the sci-fi work Airlock, the story of the only survivors of an alien attack.

Bus Trip tells the story of a disabled man who stands up for what is right and fair. It’s a film about bullying and the courage and conviction required to stand up to bullies.

On the night, Chan thanked the lead actor, Peter, and his mother, “who so strongly supports his acting career”.

“We shot it in one day on the bus,” he said. “Thanks to NOVA for the platform. We’re raising awareness together.”

Chan won tickets to the American Film Market; a Universal Studios Tour; meetings with international judges for mentorships; live studio tapings; tickets to Media Access Awards & Acknowledgement; tickets to Australians in Film Gala Dinner; $5,000 in immigration services from Raynor & Associates; and a return flight to Los Angeles plus four weeks accommodation. Chan has also submitted Bus Trip to the Canberra Short Film Festival.

“I was motivated by social media videos depicting mistreatment of disabled people and wanted to produce a film that addresses how society views and treats people with a disability,” he said.

The Focus On Ability Short Film Festival is an international, five-minute short-film competition open to all, free to enter and free to attend.

CEO NOVA Employment Martin Wren said Focus started in 2009 with 12 entries from high schools and a $5,000 prize.

“In 2018, we received entries from 297 filmmakers, who are sharing over $200,000 in prizes. I thought it was a good idea, but didn’t know it would grow like this!” he said.

“I’m absolutely privileged to get out of bed every morning, because the people I work with are an inspiration.”
Recipe corner

Eating well is so important for everyone. Here is a simple dish that will please the whole family and is healthy too! Don’t stress about the ingredients - if you go a bit over or under on some it still works!

Spinach and Ricotta Canneloni

Ingredients

- Reg Cannelloni 250g
- 250g frozen spinach (thawed)
- 225g fresh ricotta or cream cheese
- 2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1/2 cup grated cheese (plus extra for serving)
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 425g can tomato puree
- 1 level tsp ground basil leaves

Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Mix spinach, ricotta cheese, egg yolks, garlic, grated cheese, nutmeg, salt and pepper together thoroughly in a medium sized bowl.
3. Fill cannelloni tubes with the prepared mixture (dunk them is the easiest way)
4. To make the sauce, heat olive oil in frying pan, add tomato puree, basil, salt and pepper and bring to the boil. Remove from heat.
5. In an oven proof baking dish pour layer of sauce over the base leaving enough to cover cannelloni.
6. Place a single layer of filled cannelloni side by side in the baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese.
7. Bake in oven at 200°C for 25-35 minutes (test by pricking with a skewer)
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