

2018

Annual Report



**People with
Disabilities**
ACT Inc

People With Disabilities ACT (PWD ACT) Annual Report 2018

PWD ACT acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we carry out our activities

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

(Banner: 2018 ACT Chief Minister Inclusion Awards, Winner: Championing in Human Rights, People With Disabilities ACT)



ABOUT PWDACT

- PWD ACT is a Disabled Peoples Organisation run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities.
- PWD ACT helps Government and the community by providing information and systemic advice on disability and evidence based information and policies to support initiatives to include people with disabilities in the community and enhanced specialist disability services.
- PWD ACT offers advice based on our lived experience of disability and a network of informed and engaged individual and organisational members with whom we can consult and feed back to Government.
- Our work is in the mainstream service and access areas that are now the key focus of the ACT Government.

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.

This Report covers the advocacy activities of People With Disabilities ACT Inc. from February 2018, the date of our previous AGM, to December 2018. The accompanying financial report covers the financial year from July 2017 to June 2018. This year has seen a heightened level of external advocacy and policy activity along with considerable work on organisational development and capacity building.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY - KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Budget Consultation

PWD ACT put a comprehensive Submission to the 2019-2020 ACT Budget Consultation process. This submission continued PWD ACT's advocacy for the implementation of the Government's election promises and matters included in the Parliamentary Agreement in relation to access and housing. The submission also called for full implementation of recommendations of the Assembly inquiry into the employment of people with disabilities and initiatives to assist young people who become engaged with the Justice System. PWD ACT joined with Living Streets Canberra to call on the ACT Government to address footpath maintenance and other pedestrian safety issues. Our submission included a separate confidential component calling on the ACT Government to fund PWD ACT appropriately to enable it to be a productive representative voice to our members and a partner to government.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Implementation in the ACT

PWD ACT presented a written submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT and gave evidence in person to the Committee. PWD ACT consulted with its members on this submission using its social media and a members' morning tea. These consultations enabled PWD ACT to include in its submission a confidential attachment containing the stories of 30 Canberrans and their interaction with the NDIS. This evidence made a real impact. The Committee's recently released report includes 30 recommendations.

PWD ACT particularly welcomes the recommendations for increased ACT Government funding for individual advocacy and for the establishment of an ACT provider of last resort. Many of the recommendations relate to the interactions of the NDIS with ACT Government agencies and the Commonwealth and ACT Governments through COAG to resolve anomalies which particularly affect ACT residents. PWD ACT will closely monitor the implementation of the Inquiry's report in the coming year.

ACT Library Services

PWD ACT put a written submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Library Services and gave evidence in person to this Committee. PWD ACT was pleased to note that the inquiry had generated a commitment from the ACT Government to conduct an access audit of library buildings. However, PWD ACT has called on the ACT Government to go further and audit the accessibility of library services, information holdings and public programs and act on the outcomes of these audits. The Inquiry has just released its Report. PWD ACT Welcomes the Inquiries recommendations:

- to create a specialist digital literacy program for people with disabilities;

- to designing an engagement strategy to include people with disabilities;
- to develop a Disability Action Plan, in partnership with the disability community.

PWD ACT looks forward to working with Libraries ACT in the coming year to implement these recommendations and commitments made at the Inquiry to conduct an access audit of library premises and employ a Specialist Learning Co-coordinator to engage with the disability sector. In this inquiry, PWD ACT and Women With Disabilities ACT worked collaboratively in the preparation of our submissions and the presentation of our evidence.

Health and Disability Project

PWD ACT was successful in applying for a \$50,000 grant from the NDIA Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) fund to undertake work relating to self-advocacy in health services for people with disabilities. The key outputs of the grant are to produce several self-advocacy toolkits to support people with disabilities to better access healthcare services, and to access higher quality healthcare supports. The project runs July 2018 to June 2019, and to date outcomes are progressing well. PWD ACT is working closely with partner organisations including Capital Health Network, ACT Human Rights Commission, ACT Health and Feros Care to identify key healthcare access and quality challenges for people with disabilities in the Territory, and to develop joint projects that create innovative resources and solutions. The most significant work to date has focused on My Health Record, with two self-advocacy resources being produced and information sessions run to support people to make the decision to opt in or not.

National Disability Strategy Project

PWD ACT completed a project to promote the National Disability Strategy in Canberra and in particular those aspects of the Strategy relating to housing, transport and employment. The National Disability Strategy features prominent in PWD ACT's Policy Statements and submissions and public comments. As part of this project PWD ACT held five member morn teas in various locations around Canberra during the reporting period. The discussion and interaction at these morning teas provided valuable material for PWD ACT to use in its advocacy and policy work. The next member morning tea will be held in February 2019.

Canberra Disability Review

PWD ACT published editions five and six of the Canberra Disability Review - a longer quality journal of views and opinions of disability issues in the ACT. Issue five included a number of articles on the theme 'the body diverse' and *A Peek into the Future* statements from the disability spokespersons of the major parties on disability policy in the first two years of the current ACT Government. Issue six contained a broad variety of material including items on housing, Canberra's town planning policies and employment. The Canberra Disability Review continues to be widely read and well received in the sector.

International Day for People with Disabilities

For the 4th consecutive year, PWD ACT, with the financial support of an International Day grant from the Office of Disability, in partnership with the Canberra Times, delivered to 100,000 readers of the Canberra Times Newspaper and to many more via the radio podcast provided by Radio 1RPH, of a 20 page supplement to celebrate the 2018 International Day of People with Disability. This was the largest supplement ever and has been highly commended for the breadth of its content.

Contact with Diversity Groups

In April 2018, PWD ACT held a forum for people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This forum was well attended. The outcome, an agreement to form a Committee including representatives from CALD communities to develop a Policy Statement to address the needs of people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds is a priority for early 2019.

The recently launched PWD ACT website includes a translation facility allowing visitors to access the content in one of 20 community languages.

In September PWD ACT held a forum for people with cognitive disabilities. This forum was largely attended by advocates. The discussion was useful but highlighted the difficulties for a small organization whose active members are people with physical or sensory disabilities in interacting with people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities.

PWD ACT remains alert for opportunities for interaction with other diversity groups such as young people, people from the LGBTIQ community and people from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but is conscious of the need to do so at their invitation and in ways which are appropriate.

Ongoing Advocacy Activity

PWD ACT has continued its advocacy for policies with respect to access, transport, housing, the NDIS, the National Disability Strategy, employment and education. PWD ACT participated actively in ACT Government and community activities on these areas of public policy which are crucial to our members. PWD ACT gave prominence to these issues in its evidence to the ACT Legislative Assembly Estimates Committee Inquiry into the 2018-2019 Budget.

In relation to transport, PWD ACT continues to advocate for people with disabilities to have opportunities to test and verify the accessibility of Canberra's Light Rail. It is concerning that this has not been done so close to the commencement of Light Rail services in early 2019. We receive assurances that the light rail vehicles and infrastructure will comply with the DDA Transport Standards and will be accessible. However, the recent actions of the Queensland Government in rolling out inaccessible Next Generation NGR trains should be a reminder to us all that transport accessibility cannot and should not be taken for granted.

PWD ACT continues to monitor the implementation of reforms to the ACT Taxi, hire car and ride share system. Regrettably, our concerns for continuing strong regulation of vehicle and driver standards, and for the easing of restrictions on vehicle types to enable a wider variety of more suitable taxi vehicles to be used, continues to go unheeded. We also need to continue to advocate for ride share providers to be subject to the Transport Standards and the Disability Discrimination Act. As far as we are aware, the introduction of regulated ride share services in Canberra has not had a substantial adverse effect on the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Service (WATS) in Canberra, as in Melbourne, but we continue to monitor this aspect of transport deregulation.

Future Advocacy Activity

PWD ACT Policy Statements are being revised in preparation for the 2020 ACT Election.

A Position Statement on Inclusive Education was developed and is being promulgated. This followed PWD ACT's appearance in a number of items in the Canberra times in relation to education issues. PWD ACT's strong condemnation of the use of a metal cage for a student with behavioural issues drew an equally strong response from Education ACT but also produced a dialogue with Education ACT on education issues.

Organisational Development

At the request of, and with funding from the ACT Office for Disability, PWD ACT has undertaken a number of activities in 2017-2018 relating to its sustainability as an organisation for people with disabilities organisation. At the invitation of the ACT Office for Disability, PWD ACT approached a number of its sector colleagues to discuss organisational co-operation or amalgamation with a view to reducing administrative expenses and governance burdens. The outcomes of these various discussions were that both PWD ACT and the other organisations did not feel that there was sufficient benefits to them, or gains in efficiency, to enter into either collaborative arrangements or merger/amalgamations discussions.

The ACT Office for Disability also funded PWD ACT to engage a business consultant to chart a way forward for PWD ACT in the near future. Rebecca Vassarotti was engaged to conduct this consultation. Rebecca has conducted extensive consultations with PWD ACT, its sector colleagues and individual and associate members and has worked extensively with the PWD ACT Board and staff. Rebecca has recently submitted her report to the PWD ACT Board and we are pleased that she is presenting her findings to us at 2018 AGM.

Media and Communications

In September 2018, Rachel Sirr commenced as PWD ACT's Media and Communications Officer. PWD ACT has increased its reach and profile within the ACT community and its rapid response capacity through the use of both traditional and social media and is able to. A recent example is that PWD ACT's publication of the Canberra Times Supplement for IDPWD was the lead item on the morning news on Canberra's FM station on Sunday 2 December.

A new website and associated refreshing of our branding were launched on 3 December. Radio announcements promoting membership of PWD ACT have been rolled out on Radio 1RPH. There has been a slow increase in the numbers of individual members PWD ACT has welcomed three new Organisational Members, Pegasus Riding for the Disabled, Basketball ACT and Skipper Care. PWD ACT has attended and promoted an array of events of our members and other organisations including barbecues, discos talks, workshops and networking events. In the coming year, PWD ACT looks to increased links with member organisations through participation in their events.

Staffing Changes

The Committee has combined the positions of Executive Officer and Media and Communications Officer and appointed Rachel to the combined position. The current Executive Officer Robert Altamore has taken on the role of Office Manager.

Siobhan Clair, PWD ACT's previous Project and Policy Officer completed the National Disability Strategy Project and is now working at the Office for Disability. Rob Woolley has joined PWD ACT as the new Project Officer for the Health and Disability Project and has also undertaken a number of other policy and administrative tasks for PWD ACT.

Finance

The Financial Report and Auditor's Report are provided as separate documents. The audited Financial Statement shows a surplus of \$29,789.72 in the 2017-2018 Financial Year. However, this is due to the pre-payment of some of the grant income to sustain the organisation's operations for the 2018-2019 Year. The Committee's focus on good financial management and active budgeting for a surplus in the coming year will see that PWD ACT's reserves are maintained at a level to ensure PWD ACT's financial sustainability. However, the financial viability of PWD ACT depends on its performance of its peak body and advocacy roles to a level which will enable the ACT Government to fund the organisation into the future.

Committee and Governance

The Committee elected at the 2017 AGM

Mr David Luck	President
Mrs Terry Millar	Vice-President

Mr Paul Mugambi	Secretary
Mr Andrew Geraghty	Treasurer
Mr Brian Wilson	Committee Member
Ms Mary Res	Committee Member

During the reporting period, Mrs Terry Millar died on 25 August 2018. PWD ACT takes this opportunity to record appreciation of her lifetime of advocacy for people with disabilities, for her service on the PWD ACT Committee for several years, and for her friendship to us all.

Bonsella Business Solutions acted as Auditor for this financial year.

Recognition and Awards

(Pictured – PWD ACT Committee and Staff at the Awards☺)



At the 2018 Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards on 6 December, PWD ACT was recognised for its 30 plus years of advocacy for our members with the receipt of the Chief Minister's Inclusion Award for *Championing Human Rights*. This Award recognises both our current advocacy efforts and the work of the many Committee members and staff who have gone before us. In addition two PWD ACT members received Awards. Mr Robert Altamore received an award for *Achievement in Inclusion* and Paul Mugambi received an Award for *Excellence in Making Inclusion Happen*.

Future Activities

The future activities of PWD ACT will depend on the levels of funding we receive in the 2019-2020 year and the decisions taken by the Committee and members in relation to the implementation of Rebecca Vassarotti's report. However, when making these decisions, we must take into consideration a climate in which we know that there is much work to be done. The ACT Government has ambitious plans for Canberra in areas relating to town planning which affects access, housing, transport, health, education and the community services sector. PWD ACT has a role to play to ensure that people with disabilities are at the table for these discussions and that

their views are heard. To fulfill this role, we need a strong Committee and input from individual and organisational members in the coming year.

Appreciations

PWD ACT Gratefully acknowledges the ACT Government through the ACT Office for Disability for its financial support which in this year has included grants for core operations, International Day, digital inclusion and a grant under the inclusion Program. PWD ACT also acknowledges support from the National Disability Insurance Agency for a grant under the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program in 2017-18 and the grant for the Health and Disability Project in 2018-2019. PWD ACT is a member of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and through AFDO received a \$10,000 grant under an AFDO ILC funded program to support its member organisations.

PWD ACT also acknowledges the Canberra Southern Cross Club which has supported us since 2011. PWD ACT's organisational members and sector colleagues have given us continuing support in various ways during the reporting period.