



**WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES ACT  
Budget Submission 2015 – 2016**

**This document has been prepared by:**

**Women With Disabilities ACT**

**[wwdact@wchm.org.au](mailto:wwdact@wchm.org.au)**

**[www.wchm.org.au/WWDACT/wwdact](http://www.wchm.org.au/WWDACT/wwdact)**

Women With Disabilities ACT and the Women's Centre for Health Matters acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors.

We acknowledge that the effect of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Social Support Networks.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Recommendations .....	5
<b>3. Gendered Disaggregated Data .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Recommendations .....	7
<b>4. Housing .....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Recommendations .....	7
<b>5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1. Introduction

Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. Established in 1995, WWDACT adheres to a human rights philosophy, based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of (all forms of) Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). WWDACT works with government and non-government organisations to improve the status and lives of women with disabilities in the ACT and surrounding region.

WWDACT, through its membership, has strong links to relevant ACT advocacy organisations such as Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI), People With Disabilities ACT (PWDACT) and the Health Care Consumers Association of the ACT (HCCA). WWDACT also has a close association with the Women's Centre for Health Matters and Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia.

This budget submission will focus on three (3) key areas. These include:

- Social Support Networks
- Gendered Disaggregation of data
- Housing

WWDACT wishes to highlight these areas as the most significant pertaining to women with disabilities in the ACT for the financial year of 2015 – 2016.

## 2. Social Support Networks

Social inclusion is an important prerequisite to all individuals reaching their full potential, and leading happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. When individuals are excluded from the opportunities they need to build the lives that they want, they can become trapped in a cycle of disadvantage, leading to lower education, lower rates of employment and poorer health outcomes<sup>12</sup>.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) recognises that higher levels of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem could be caused by the lower social status often associated with disability<sup>3,4</sup>. A great deal more research is needed in this area, not only to explore the

---

<sup>1</sup> Women With Disabilities ACT and the Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Strong Women, Great City*, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Women with Disabilities ACT, *Disability Employment Services Report*, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Women with Disabilities ACT and the Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Strong Women Great City*, 2012.

intersection of disability and mental health, but also to unravel how we talk about mental health and wellness for people with disabilities when mental illness can itself be defined as a disability.

Overall, women with disabilities experience a range of health and social inequalities compared to non-disabled women. In particular, women with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence than non-disabled women, experience less control over what happens to their bodies and face discrimination and prejudice in determining their reproductive rights<sup>5</sup>.

As outlined in the *Strong Women, Great City* report,<sup>6</sup> disability disaggregated data would assist to develop an understanding of current levels of social connectedness amongst women with disabilities in the ACT. This data is currently not available.

Respondents to the Women With Disabilities ACT and the Women's Centre for Health Matters survey, *Strong Women, Great City*, felt that they could be better supported to maintain their social connection through:

- Greater support and programs from services
- Improving social attitudes toward disability
- Improving the frequency, availability and cost of public transport and housing
- Improved awareness regarding the incidence of violence against women with disabilities

The above indicate that support networks are undoubtedly connected to a woman with disabilities' ability to develop and participate in mainstream activities. When a woman with disabilities does not have adequate access to supports like these, she cannot fully establish her life. These networks play a vital role in the successful outcomes of a woman with disabilities' life in the ACT NDIS launch site environment.

## 2.1 Recommendations

WWDACT strongly urges the ACT Government to allocate money into existing community services and independent advocacy organisations to improve the lives of women in the four areas identified by respondents to the *Strong Women, Great City* report. This action by the ACT Government will refine and enhance the ACT's social inclusion and the ACT Women's Plan 2010-15<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> K Howe & S Salthouse, *Lack of Data Means Lack of Action – A clinical examination of access to health services for women with disabilities*, Women With Disabilities Australia, 2004, <<http://www.wwda.org.au/hreocsumm.htm>>

<sup>5</sup> Women With Disabilities ACT and Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Strong Women, Great City*, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Reference needed...

<sup>7</sup> ACT Office for Women, *ACT Women's Plan 2010 – 2015*, 2010 – 2015.

WWDACT also strongly recommends that money be allocated toward enhancing existing violence services to streamline the process that women with disabilities face when requesting supports during this challenging time.

### 3. Gendered Disaggregated Data

Sex disaggregated data is defined as any data that has been disaggregated by biological sex and thus presents information specific to the life experiences of men and women.<sup>8 9</sup> It is estimated that 56.4% of people with disability in the ACT are women.<sup>10</sup> Data which is disaggregated by both sex and disability exists in small amounts within the ACT there, however, it is not consistently available and often not available in strategic areas of policy development. Additionally much of the disaggregated data which is collected through surveys by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) surveys is not publicly available to non-government entities.

Policies that do not reflect the important differences in the lived experiences of gender and its indicators, tend to perpetuate inequality. While WWDACT acknowledges that the ACT Government is making efforts to eliminate the perpetuation of social inequity in policies, WWDACT believes that an increase in disability disaggregated data availability in the Territory will enhance these efforts.

WWDACT will continue to advocate for sex and disability disaggregated data to be collected both at a national and local level, in order to develop a sound evidence base, and for the further disaggregation of women's health data to include indicators like age and cultural background to build an accurate picture of women's health and circumstances, particularly when it comes to women who experience disadvantage.<sup>11</sup> The *Strong Women, Great City* report demonstrated that the need for disability disaggregated data is of high priority within the ACT. The paramount reason for this need is that women with disabilities continue to experience inequities, which can result in poorer health outcomes, lower educational attainment, economic insecurity, higher rates of poverty, and social exclusion or isolation.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (1999), *Framework for Integration of Women in APEC*, APEC Secretariat, Singapore, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Position Paper on Sex Disaggregated Data*, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Women With Disabilities ACT and Women's Centre for Health Matters , *Strong Women Great City*, 2012..

<sup>11</sup> Women's Centre for Health Matters , *Position Paper On Sex Disaggregated Data 2010*, *Women's Centre for Health Matters*, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Were Met with Disabilities ACT and the Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Strong Women, Great City*, 2012

### **3.1 Recommendations**

WWDACT recommends that the ACT Government invest in purchasing data which has already been collected, e.g. by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and which is disaggregated by sex and disability, but not publically available. Where this data is not available for purchase, that the ACT Government invest in embedding routine collection of such data locally, managed through the ACT Directorates.

## **4. Housing**

One of the major priorities, in the past, of Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT), has been to ensure that the rights of women with disabilities is always considered when government is creating new public housing opportunities.

WWDACT is aware that the current status of women with disabilities in adequate housing within the ACT requires substantial improvement.<sup>13</sup> In order to address the housing needs of women and girls with disabilities, we need to ensure access by women and girls with disabilities and older women with disabilities, to social protection programs and poverty reduction programs. WWDACT also recognises that the new, pilot NDIS environment will provide new opportunities for women and girls with disabilities to consider different housing options in the ACT.

### **4.1 Recommendations**

WWDACT acknowledges the progress that the ACT Government has made regarding the right to adequate housing for women with disabilities in the ACT. As WWDACT can clearly see and appreciate the implications of not having adequate housing for this marginalised sector, it recommends that the inclusion of the right to adequate housing for women with disabilities be adopted in the Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT).

WWDACT urges the ACT Government to develop and implement public housing options - including emergency shelter, social housing and community housing, and independent, shared equity housing - which are tailored to respond to the needs and expectations of people with disability for appropriate and sustainable housing.

## **5. Conclusion**

While ACT women with disabilities tend to experience better social outcomes overall - they are better educated, have higher incomes, and have higher housing standards than women

---

<sup>13</sup> Submission to *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—A Good Idea for the ACT?* Women With Disabilities ACT (August 2011)

nationally - there are a significant number of ACT women who are marginalised and isolated from their community and its wider standard of living, at a great cost to their health and wellbeing. Due to the lack of accurate, sex-disaggregated data on marginalised and isolated groups, it is almost impossible to quantify the number of women with disabilities in the ACT that are experiencing marginalisation and isolation.

WWDACT would urge the ACT Government to implement the recommendations outlined in this Budget submission and looks forward to any further conversations about them. WWDACT looks forward to participating in future budget consultations and thanks the ACT Government for the opportunity to participate in this one.