



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JONATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

**Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21**  
**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

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Asked by Elizabeth Kikkert:

In relation to: Funding for people with disability and disability-specific services  
Output class 1.2: Office for Disability, page 14.

1. Advocacy for Inclusion publicly expressed disappointment in this long-awaited budget, noting that ‘there is nothing new for people with disability or funding towards disability-specific services in the cards for 2020-21.’

This sentiment has been echoed by several other groups and organisations that support the disability community, for example: National Disability Services ACT stated that there was ‘minimal new investment in the disability and community sectors,’ and ACTCOSS notes that ‘there is little new spending directly targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups...’ The Covid-19 pandemic has made our most at-risk communities (including people living with disability) all the more vulnerable.

With an increase in services but no extra investment or support for disability and community services, what changes (or lack of change) in service and performance results is anticipated by the ACT Government from our community services in the coming year?

- a. In consultation with relevant stakeholders, does the ACT Government believe that the funding currently invested in disability and community services is adequate to service the needs of the ACT community?
  - b. What other measures will the ACT Government take to support disability and community services?
2. In their budget submission, People With Disabilities ACT expressed, ‘much needed support from the ACT Government so we can continue our work in supporting our members and the government itself.’ With increasing demand, combined with reducing staff and a funding base that has not grown for 10 years, has the ACT Government committed to invest in recurrent funding to at least the minimum value that People With Disabilities have recommended?



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- a. If no: People With Disabilities not only supports Canberrans living with disabilities, their families and their communities – they also provide direct support and essential advice to the ACT Government. What plans does the ACT Government have to support their growing demands so that they can in turn support you in better governance?
  - b. If yes: how many years forward has the ACT Government committed to annual funding of at least the recommended value?
3. Women with Disabilities ACT have also seen a significant increase and expansion in their activities. They have requested an additional \$50,000 per year to be able to sustain the quality of their work whilst meeting their engagement demands. Has the ACT Government committed to providing Women with Disabilities with the additional funding requested in order for them to be able to meet their needs in serving the ACT community?
- a. If no: Women with Disabilities have requested the additional funding to extend working hours for their community engagement officer, hire a part-time research and policy officer to work on significant projects for women with disabilities in the ACT, run more social events to provide stronger social networks social networks for women with disabilities and to maintain a larger office given the increasing demand for their services. Which of these service enhancements will the ACT Government do without?
  - b. If yes: Women with Disabilities have also recommended that the ACT Government invest in ACT community organisations as well as better access to government education facilities, transport, crisis shelters and disability liaison in hospitals for women living with disability. Minister, are you satisfied that there is adequate investment in these areas to support people living with disability, their families and carers in our community?

Emma Davidson MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. The ACT Government acknowledges the important work of community service organisations and peak bodies and is committed to ensuring the voices of people with disability are heard. The Government remains committed to supporting disability peaks and continues to fund People With Disabilities ACT (PWDACT), Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT), National Disability Services (NDS) and Carers ACT.



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Through the health pandemic the ACT Government committed an additional \$850,000 to support the actions of the COVID19 Disability Strategy. Many of these actions were co-designed with disability peak organisations and support organisations. Through the Strategy, Advocacy for Inclusion and the ACT Aged, Disability and Carer Advocacy Service received funding of \$100,000 each through to the end of the 2020-21 financial year. NDS was also funded \$110,000 in order to support and engage the disability support sector through the health pandemic. The Strategy also provided \$40,000 to a consortium of disability peaks and services to support better communication with vulnerable members of the community through COVID-19.

1a. The ACT Government listens closely to, and collaborates with, all stakeholders in identifying the best ways of meeting the needs of people with disability and their supporters in the ACT. The fast-paced disability reform environment offers a variety of opportunities for strengthening funding, including through the Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) building funding that the ACT contributes through our commitment to the NDIS. We support our community to access all available avenues of resourcing.

1b. The ACT continues to support disability and community services by identifying and promoting better service practices, sharing information about issues of mutual interest across the sector, and ensuring that disability and community services are aware of ACT Government initiatives and measures. Further the ACT Government will seek to support people with disability and the sector through our commitment to a new National Disability Strategy, due to be launched in late 2021.

2. The ACT Government has not committed to investing in additional recurrent funding for People with Disabilities ACT (PWDACT). PWDACT continues to receive indexation and Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) funding as aligns with funding for the community sector.

2a. ACT Government has been working with PWDACT on their ongoing viability. PWDACT has initiated and been supported by the ACT Government to enter an auspice arrangement with Advocacy for Inclusion with a view to a merger of the organisations over the medium-term. This arrangement is anticipated to provide better support for the community of people with disability and ACT Government in return for the funding provided.

2b. N/A.

3. The ACT Government has not committed to providing Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) with the additional funding requested.

3a. The ACT Government continues to support and work with WWDACT, especially in times of stress, change and loss. The ACT Government and other community partners continue to work closely with WWDACT to support their viability and to strengthen and renew the service offerings of the organisation. The ACT Government continues to work in partnership and support the organisation in the identification of funding sources.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**QON No. 44**

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3b. N/A.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature: *Emma Davidson*

Date: 29 March 2021

By the Minister for Disability, Emma Davidson MLA