

2022

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

TENTH ASSEMBLY

DISABILITY JUSTICE STRATEGY 3RD ANNUAL REPORT

STATEMENT

**Presented by
Ms Emma Davidson MLA
Minister for Disability
September 2022**

I present the third progress report for the ten-year Disability Justice Strategy.

The Disability Justice Strategy was launched in August 2019 with the aim of achieving equality and inclusion for people with disability in the justice system.

Our vision is for the ACT to be a place where everyone is given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Removing barriers for people with disability in accessing justice is a key step in achieving that vision.

We know people with disability experience more legal problems than others.

We know people with disability experience high rates of violence.

National and International research tells us people with disability face many barriers to accessing justice across both the civil and criminal justice systems which worsens outcomes for both victims and accused people with disability.

The Disability Justice Strategy aims to tackle these barriers so people with disability in the ACT are provided with the supports and adjustments they need to have equal access to justice. This work will, in turn, improve the justice system for all people.

Throughout the last twelve months, the ACT Government and many of our non-government partners have worked diligently to make progress toward this goal.

The work achieved by the disability liaison officers and the Community of Practice continues to be a highlight in improving the justice system for people with disability. The disability liaison officers work together,

through the community of practice, to ensure people with disability have a smoother journey through the justice system. The community of practice work to ensure access to reasonable adjustments and disability supports that people need during what is a challenging time for many people.

The disability liaison officers from Legal Aid ACT, ACT Courts and Tribunal and ACT Corrective Services have collaborated to ensure individuals with disability have access to appropriate reasonable adjustments throughout their court proceedings and on entering custody.

Disability liaison officers from Victims Support ACT and ACT Policing have worked together to support people with disability who are victims of crime, to engage with police in reporting these crimes.

This group also continues to build the capacity of their justice colleagues to better identify and respond to people with disability. These DLOs facilitate training about best practice, support reviews of policies and procedures to make sure they are accessible and take into account the experiences of people with disability and support the translation of critical information into accessible formats.

There has been a lot of progress this year towards the creation of accessible information about the justice system, which will make the system easier to understand for all of us. Having information that is easy to understand and informs people about what to expect from the justice system was identified as one of the most important changes needed during the development of the Disability Justice Strategy.

This year Canberra Community Law have produced a series of Social Scripts, in partnership with people with disability, to help people to know

what to expect when they meet with a lawyer, attend an ACAT hearing or attend conciliation at the ACT Human Rights Commission.

ACT Courts and Tribunal have created a series of videos about attending ACAT hearings along with an Easy English guide about guardianship and management of property.

Also, Child and Youth Protection Services have published Easy English versions of the Working Together for Kids series. These are practical guides outlining typical child protection processes in the ACT. They help parents and families to access relevant and helpful information when they need it.

Something I am very excited about this year is the creation of a Better Practice Guide on Interactions with People with Disability. This will support our police to make practical adjustments to improve communication and outcomes for people with disability. This guide is nation leading, with nothing similar that we know of in other jurisdictions in Australia. I acknowledge the efforts made by ACT Policing to incorporate the guide into their everyday practice.

This is only a small example of the work that has happened this year as part of the Disability Justice Strategy.

The work involved to achieve the goals of the Disability Justice Strategy is challenging and complex and it requires a concerted and sustained effort over the long term.

As the Disability Justice Strategy First Action Plan comes to an end next year, we are working with people with disability, people in the justice system and the community more broadly to develop the Second Action Plan.

We remain mindful of the experiences of people with disability being shared through the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Our commitment to equal access to justice as well as our commitment to a new ACT Disability Strategy will help us respond to recommendations made by the Royal Commission next year.

I thank all those invested in making our justice system equitable and accessible for all.

I encourage all to have a look at the Third Annual Report on the Disability Justice Strategy. The report will be published on the Community Services Directorate website.