



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Dr Marisa Patterson MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into  
Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation  
(Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023

**Submission Number:** 001

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Committee Secretary  
Inquiry into the ACT Budget 2022-23  
Select Committee on Estimates  
ACT Legislative Assembly

Via Email: [LACommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LACommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

### **2022/23 ACT Budget and People with Disability**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our analysis of the 2022/23 ACT Budget following the release of the Budget on Tuesday 2 August 2022.

This brief submission is on behalf of Advocacy for Inclusion and Women With Disabilities ACT. We are organisations representing people with disabilities in the ACT.

#### Investments sought by people with disability

Our headline asks in the ACT Budget Process included:

- Adequate funding of National Preventative Measure bodies so they can carry out a preventative function against human rights abuses and meet our OPCAT obligations.
- Funding to increase the disability loading for students and work to ensure universal design access to school premises and curricula
- Funding to implement the Disability Justice Strategy and related priorities including:
- Funding to implement AMC Healthy Prisons Review recommendations including implementing universal design in ACT correctional facilities and more timely access to functional assessments –
- Funding to implement recommendations from pillar 4 of the R25 by 25 Recidivism Strategy including transitional services to support correctional detainees with disability re-enter the community, the transitional centre and to implement the promised ACT Corrections Disability Framework.
- Funding to implement the ACT Disability Strategy including adequate funding for DPO's and the ACT Office for Disability to deliver and monitor the Strategy especially funding for the disability health strategy and funding for accessible housing and better planning.

## Investments welcomed

The Budget does include some welcome investments which address the needs of people with disability. These include

- Funding for public housing, growth and renewal and housing maintenance
- Some modest cost of living assistance including utility concessions
- Increases in student equity loadings
- The expansion of a number of health and mental health programs.
- Funding for community infrastructure to the extent that it improves accessible infrastructure.
- Likewise investments for health infrastructure including at the Canberra Hospital and Calvary are positive and it is our hope this is focussed on improving the accessibility of these facilities.
- We also welcomed the decision to improve access and affordability to terminations in the ACT up to 16 weeks given the importance of reproductive choice to the people we represent.
- Funding to continue the Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service (CAYPELS) for children (however we note it is for one year only)
- The extension of Flexibus is welcome however we are also keen to see more support for community transport and the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme.

## Investment gaps for people with disability

Overall we feel that the Budget delivered measures which meets some needs of people with disabilities but lacked specific dedicated funding to will drive whole of government improvements for people with disability. These include substantial ongoing funding for the Governments ACT Disability Strategy and multi-year commitment to the new Disability Health Strategy.

Our organisations sought funding that demonstrated a whole of government commitment to the ACT Disability Strategy. While the Strategy is still being developed, some funded signature initiatives are important to respond to pressing issues in the short term and signal that the Government intends to respond to the many issues raised through the consultation process.

Priorities for early action include the need for a disability diversionary pathway for law enforcement, a substantial renewed commitment to inclusive education including Universal Design for Learning, a funded Disability Health Strategy, a disability-centred response to COVID, specific action to deliver accessible housing, and social planning work on accessible spaces, places, transport, and community infrastructure.

While there was some initial welcome money for the ACT Disability Health Strategy this money is for one year only and is non ongoing and is funded through an offset within ACT Health.

The need for work on disability and health has been brought into sharp focus by the COVID pandemic which has highlighted gaps and barriers which already existed but now require priority action. Our priorities for the Strategy include:

- Policy responses: addressing cost issues through dedicated low-cost services, including a once a year free extended consultation, and information access; and auditing and

improving health infrastructure to make it more fit for purpose for people with disability; plus an integrated and coordinated approach to care including co-located services to make health more accessible and less burdensome on women with disabilities

- Workforce development: providing a range of training, disability confidence and skills development work lead by people with disability to a range of people including practitioners, health and wellness services outside the formal system and, specifically, to doctors doing assessments for income support and disability services
- Services: establishing specialist centres of excellence for diagnostic disabilities with wrapped around services and disability sensitive maternity services and parenting support

There is also a need to ensure more supports and cohesion at the NDIS and health interface, including addressing gaps and allowing people to take more NDIS supports into health care settings. This requires work between the ACT and Commonwealth Governments.

Funding for youth mental health and suicide prevention is positive however we'd also like to see a focus on intersectional responses to reducing harm from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs plus the mental health needs of older people and people with disabilities including for people with intellectual disability. COVID has increased the need for these responses.

The Budget did not deliver money to support National Preventative Mechanisms to meet our OPCAT obligations although we understand that discussions on the funding of these mechanisms is in train with the Federal Government. We will be watching the outcomes of these closely.

While the Budget included a modest boost to the equitable enrolment adjustment AFI continues to identify the need to address the funding gap between segregated learning environments and mainstream settings and to ensure Universal Learning Design is implemented across learning materials, digital information, places and spaces.

There is also a growing set of needs to provide support and assistance to people with disabilities whose safety, circumstances, community access and supports are at risk in the COVID pandemic. Issues include continuity of supports, safe access to healthcare and community development work with people who remain isolated.

The Budget included support to implement the Governments planning review but we support calls across the community sector for a focus on social planning capacity within the ACT Government to engage with vulnerable people and people with disability to ensure housing, the urban landscape and community facilities meet the needs of people with barriers to access.

A more detailed list of measures welcomed by us as well as gaps in investment is at [Attachment A](#). Please feel free to contact Craig Wallace, Head of Policy AFI [REDACTED] in the first instance to discuss.

Regards

*Sent by email*

**Craig Wallace**  
Head of Policy  
Advocacy for Inclusion

**Kat Reed**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Women With Disabilities ACT

5 August 2022

## **ACT Budget 2022/23**

### **Summary list of initiatives and gaps identified by Disabled Peoples Organisations**

#### *What we welcome*

- Development of the ACT Disability Health Strategy and first action plan (however this is a one year offset of \$260,000 where we would expect considerable additional funding)
- Money for school infrastructure builds
- Equitable enrolment adjustment of 4.9% from 2021 to 2022 includes students with disabilities.
- Funding to make government services more accessible online (13,362 over 4 years)
- \$50 increase to the utilities concession
- Implement the Carers Strategy (but we are concerned there is no funding for the Disability Strategy)
- Expansion of mental health programs for young people and suicide prevention as well as an expansion of the PACER program which links police ambulance and clinicians in early response
- Funding for the hydrotherapy pool
- Funding to improve Canberra's health infrastructure including at the Canberra hospital and Calvary (but specialist diagnostic missing)
- Funding to continue the equipment loan service
- Expanding specialist homelessness capacity
- Funding for public housing growth and renewal and maintenance
- Funding for the Human Rights Commission
- Funding to maintain the Flexibus transport services
- Work on diversity in the ACT Public Service

#### *What's missing*

- Funding to deliver the ACT Disability Strategy – no funding for early concrete actions and funded signature initiatives that demonstrate focus and whole of government commitment. Examples of work needing attention is a disability diversionary pathway for law enforcement, a renewed commitment to inclusive education, work on health access, a disability-centred response to COVID, specific action to deliver accessible housing, and social planning work on accessible spaces, places, transport, and community infrastructure.
- Ongoing funding for the Disability Health Strategy beyond the first year and outside of offset funding
- Funding for universal design across curricula and infrastructure to support inclusive education. The equitable enrolment adjustment in the ed directorate is a small step, but still does not address the disparity in loadings between mainstream and segregated settings.
- Details and commitment to ongoing funding for the Disability Justice Strategy beyond the forward estimates
- Funding of the Inspector of Corrections to fully meet our obligations under the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (OPCAT) to create National Preventative Mechanisms for closed spaces – while the government has created a policy position we remain unconvinced this will enable the range of functions expected within a mechanism
- Specific actions to progress accessible housing especially to implement, promote and encourage take up of the new silver standard requirements
- Intersectional approaches to mental health and reducing harm from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs including for older people and people with intellectual disability

