



Election Priorities – Disability IS an election issue

The ACT Election is scheduled for 19 October 2024 and Disabled Peoples and Representative Organisations offer these priorities for voters and candidates in the lead up to the poll. We are non-partisan organisations which represent people with a range of disabilities. Our work and priorities are informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.

These priorities are the result of consultation, policy and advocacy work from our organisations and will be reinforced by Shared Election Platforms containing more detail in some key areas to be released between now the election. For more information visit the [Advocacy for Inclusion Election Hub](#).

In the next ACT Legislative Assembly, we want the Government and members to work towards an inclusive and welcoming Canberra which delivers the promise of a Human Rights Jurisdiction for the 1 in 5 Canberrans with disability. We ask candidates to commit to actions that:

- ✓ Ensure Canberrans with disability have **access to timely and adequate disability supports** including non-specialist supports **outside of the NDIS**
- ✓ Ensure Canberrans with disability have **timely access to quality individual and systemic advocacy**
- ✓ Ensure Canberrans with disability have **access to critical acute, primary and preventative health care**
- ✓ Address the **over-representation of people with disability in the ACT Justice system**
- ✓ Work towards **genuine inclusion of students with disability in mainstream classrooms**
- ✓ Put an **end to gender-based violence** against people with disability
- ✓ Ensure that the appropriate systems and infrastructure are in place to enable **people with different kinds of impairment and disabilities to engage with, live and move around Canberra**
- ✓ Ensure that people with disability can **find and secure accessible and affordable housing in the community**



Disability support

To ensure Canberrans with disability have access to timely and adequate disability supports including non-specialist supports outside of the NDIS we need the Government to:

There are **77,300** people with disability in the ACT and only 10,780 receive NDIS.

- Properly fund the new system of **non-NDIS Foundational supports** so it is bedrock, guaranteed, co-designed and without gaps following the end of the Independent Linkages and Capacity building grants
- **Restore the Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP)**
- Fund **intensive case management** for people with disability in complex circumstances
- Increase funds to provide **medium-longer term support to people in mental health crisis** in contact with PACER
- Expand and sustain a **Mental health clinic for adults and children with intellectual disability**

Advocacy

To ensure Canberrans with disability have timely access to quality individual and systemic advocacy we seek a:

The proportion of people with disability in the ACT has **increased from 15.8% in 2012 to 21.1% in 2022**

“In many public hearings, the **Royal Commission** heard the **lack of adequate or consistent funding is a major factor** contributing to the unmet demand for disability advocacy”

DRC Report

- **\$875,000 boost to disability advocacy** to cope with increased requirements due to NDIS and rapid growth and reform. This includes:
 - An additional \$350,000 to AFI for peak functions, systemic advocacy and individual advocacy. This would pay for a dedicated intake officer and two FTE staff in systemic advocacy
 - \$150,000 for ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability for: coordination, training and wages for a reference group of people with intellectual disability to advise on all aspects of the services we provide and the advocacy we undertake plus employment of a dedicated advocacy and policy officer
 - An additional \$200,000 to Women with Disabilities ACT for systemic advocacy. This would double policy and advocacy capacity within the organisation and provide sustainability for consultation and community activities, in particular WWDACT’s lived experience Policy Advisory Committee
 - The ACT has an increasing focus on health access for people with disability and we need resources and capability to engage in this agenda. That includes an additional \$175,000 to the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT to support one full-time equivalent position for research and policy analysis, as well as additional funding for MHCC ACT to contribute to a research initiative aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the PACER program for individuals with co-occurring mental health conditions and disabilities



Health

To ensure Canberrans with disability have access to critical acute, primary and preventative health care we seek:

1 in 4
Canberrans
with disability
find it **difficult**
to access a
GP.

"I have had
two occasions
where I've
been unwell
and I think
they're going
to want me to
come back
and I think can
I budget for
that? You
reasonably
can't afford to
be sick." –
Bron

- **Full delivery of the ACT Disability Health Strategy** with 60% of funding going towards front facing and on the ground delivery
- **Free/low cost extended consultations** for people with disability
- **Priority hospital kit upgrades**
 - Accessible and height adjustable beds and slide boards in emergency departments
 - Modern commodes and shower chairs
 - Fully compliant left- and right-hand transfer toilets
 - Communications boards in every ward
- **Affordable wraparound diagnostic services and clinics** in the ACT. We seek these for people managing some ongoing diagnostic conditions and chronic illnesses and for people who are neurodivergent
- **Disability liaison officers at all Canberra Hospitals** including the University of Canberra Rehabilitation hospital
- **Social work and Occupational Therapy positions** for long stay patients at the University of Canberra Rehabilitation hospital
- Commit to building a **residential parent-baby mental health unit**, ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities
- **Accessible and affordable reproductive technology** to ensure these technologies are available to people with disability
- More support for **community based gyms and hydrotherapy**
- Social model and diagnostic overshadowing **training for all ACT Health staff**
- **Continued support for people with long COVID** and better responses to COVID safety especially in health settings such as the University of Canberra Hospital as well as primary care
- **Community health access grants** to improve physical, sensory and digital access to primary care settings
- **A Voluntary Assisted Dying support package** to anticipate and prevent unintended impacts of the new scheme, including:
 - Emergency pool of diversionary disability supports for people considering VAD
 - Suicide prevention work targeted towards people with disability
 - Disability training for all Doctors and Nurses involved in VAD prescribing



Justice

To address the over-representation of people with disability in the ACT Justice system we need:

One-third of AMC detainees identified as having a disability in 2022.

“I’ve been let out here [AMC] and made homeless four times.” – AMC detainee

- 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 address recidivism** by implementing 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 center and to implement the promised ACT Corrections Disability Framework
- Funding to **enhance Bail Support Plans** to better support people with disability with precarious access to immediate and basic welfare needs such as income and housing
- Funding to focus attention on **addressing issues with mandated attendance** by people with disability at specific programs e.g. drug and alcohol and family and domestic violence
- Continued focus and implementation of the **Disability Justice Strategy**

Education

To work towards genuine inclusion of students with disability in mainstream classrooms and create better life chances and outcomes for students with disability we need the Government to:

The number of students meeting ACT Student Disability Criteria increased by 23.8% between 2018 and 2022

- Address **teacher workload** issues to ensure that teachers are able to allocate focus and attention to inclusion
- **Increase the student funding loading** for students with disability
- Build **universal design into all curricula and premises**
- Make **critical access upgrades to ACT schools** – establish a firm target for all of them complying with access standards
- Commit to a **goal of moving students out of segregated settings**



Gender, anti-violence and families

To put an end to gender-based violence against people with disability we need:

Across Australia, **65% of women with disabilities** report experiencing at least one incident of violence since the age of 15.

- Funding for **parenting supports, individual advocates and disability liaison**;
 - disability violence training for Child and Young Person Support workers
 - a navigator position to support parents with disability.
- The **Integrated Service Response Program should be enhanced** for all parents with disabilities who are in a crisis situation
- A funding package for the delivery of an **intersectional ACT Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children**
- Calling an **ACT Inquiry into forced sterilisation** to surface, identify and prompt action on forced sterilisation in the ACT
- Ensuring all children with disabilities have **access to meaningful, timely, affirmative sexual health and consent education**
- Development of an accessible reporting tool and investigation into **more accessible reporting procedures** so people with disabilities can report violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Expanding **accessible crisis service locations** including increasing the number of physically accessible shelters and temporary housing

Planning and infrastructure

To ensure a rapidly growing and ageing city enables people with different kinds of impairment to live, move and engage around Canberra, we need the Government to deliver:

Canberra's population is projected as 600,000 people by 2050 with the those aged 85 years and over projected to **increase by 228%**

- Funding a **social planning unit** within the new ACT planning system focused on improving planning for universal design and ensuring lived experience voice of people with disability and older Canberrans is heard
- Funding to **train planners, builders and certifiers to improve accessibility**
- Funding for a rolling program of **stock take, audits and accessibility improvements** to spaces, places, urban infrastructure and community facilities in the ACT guided by lived experience
- **Small grants to encourage accessibility** improvements in older precincts and premises

“My freedom is restricted because I can't take my wheelchair everywhere I want to go.” – NDIS Review participant



Housing

To ensure that people with disability can find and maintain access to accessible and affordable housing in the community we need the Government to deliver:

A Disability Support Pension recipient could not afford any of the 1,085 ACT rentals advertised in March 2024.

“I had a lovely real estate agent who was trying to help, but she'd say things like 'you'll love this one. It's only got 3 steps at the front, and there's a little step from the living room into the family room'.” – *NDIS Review participant*

- More **public and social housing at the Gold level of accessible design** that people with disability can immediately access
- More non group **social housing** at the Gold Level
- A package of incentives to increase **private supply of universal design housing** (tax breaks, planning preferences, get mum and dad landlords to invest)
- **Better identification of rental housing** that is suitable for people with disability including requiring agents to advertise their accessible properties
- Better **housing rental application processes** that support applicants with disability;
- Provision of **longer-term housing leaseholds**, suitable for NDIS-funded home modifications package to incentivise accessibility in medium density housing
- Urgent **priority maintenance issues and upgrades** – including installing air conditioning in the home of every public housing tenant with disability.
- **Fund a housing advocate** to help people navigate and access public, social and private
- Work to **encourage more accessibility features within new medium density housing**. Money and training to incentivise the inclusion of access ready dwellings within all new developments at two stories and above
- A **devolution program out of group housing** in the ACT

Transport

To overcome transport disadvantage and ensure Canberrans with disability can easily move around our city we need the Government to:

7% of public buses in the Canberra network remain non-compliant and inaccessible.

“Lack of affordable transport limits our access to social outings and means getting to and from basic appointments can take hours.” - ACT Disability Strategy

- Build a business case for **making public transport free** noting the benefits to low income people with disability
- Diversify and **improve the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Fleet**
 - More vehicle options i.e, not just transit vans
 - Incentives for more female drivers
 - Work to driver and owner compliance and focus on passengers with disability as core business
- **Improve ACTION buses**
 - Accelerate the **replacement of the older non-compliant Renault buses**
 - Ensure **audio announcements** in all transport hubs and on buses
- **Regulate Uber/Rideshare** to require accessibility
- Regulate and **better police micro mobility** devices



- Review of **restrictions, tests and driver licence renewal processes** which restrict the ability of older people and people with disability to drive