ACT Down Syndrome Association
Building 1, Pearce Community Centre, Pearce ACT, 2607

Advocacy for Inclusion
2.02 Griffin Centre, 20 Genge St Canberra City, 2601

Mental Health Community Coalition
Level 1, Griffin Centre, 20 Genge St, Canberra City, 2601

Women with Disabilities ACT
Building 1, Pearce Community Centre, Pearce ACT, 2607

Joint Funding Submission

ACT Disabled Peoples Organisations set out funding requests for the 2024/25 ACT Government Budget

Issued by: Advocacy for Inclusion, ACT Down Syndrome, Women with Disabilities ACT and Endorsed by Mental Health Community Coalition ACT

OVERVIEW: Crucial investment into DPOs to allow for sustainable and improved advocacy responses for people with disability

What: $750,000 investment into supporting Disabled Person's Organisations (DPOs) to provide improved and sustainable systemic advocacy

Rationale: It is crucial that the voices of people with disability are heard in ACT. As disability representative organisations, DPOs are trusted to provide advocacy services and to build the capacity of people with disabilities to effectively engage in advocacy tasks.

The ACT has experienced an unprecedented increase in demand for disability advocacy services. These include complex governmental reforms, program and service changes, as well as sharp demand and need to respond to policy shifts instigated by recent national reports as the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.

It is essential that Disabled Person's Organisations are appropriately resourced to provide advocacy and to build the community of disability advocates. Without this support, DPOs will not be able to function at their best and ACT service and program changes will suffer from a lack of crucial disability representation.

Sustainable and improved advocacy responses for people with disability (Advocacy for Inclusion)

What: An additional **$350,000 - $400,000** for peak functions, systemic advocacy and individual. This would pay for a dedicated intake officer and two FTE staff in systemic advocacy.

Rationale: The DRC report recommends funding advocacy appropriately. The ACT is experiencing an unprecedented growth in demand and pressure for advocacy services driven by service and program changes including CASP to CATS, complex government reform agendas, intensive requirements to respond to program and policy shifts caused by the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS reforms, engagement with organisations developing disability action plans and the growth in the number of people with disabilities due to population growth in Canberra, population aging and increased levels of disability in the community including from COVID. There are increasingly complex service system interactions between NDIS, My Aged Care and ACT supports. Housing, education, health and NDIS all require more specialized knowledge and advocacy support.

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Supporting Canberran's with Intellectual disability to Advocate for a Good Life.

ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID)* will provide increased advocacy, information, referrals, resources and capacity building for people with intellectual disability and their families/support networks.

Budget Request $150,000 – This would pay for:

A) Coordination, training and wages for a reference group of people with intellectual disability to advise ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID)* on all aspects of the services we provide and the advocacy we undertake. This group of individuals would also be available to work alongside the ACT Government to provide expert advice and information when requested.
B) Employment of a dedicated advocacy and policy officer.

Rationale: The lived experience and voice of people with intellectual disability is a vitally important aspect of the Canberra community. Appropriate and ongoing training, support and mentoring is required to empower people with intellectual disability to effectively engage in advocacy tasks, government reference groups and information dissemination to the ACT Government and wider Canberra community.

ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID)* will expand upon our existing networks of people with intellectual disability and provide training, support and mentoring to allow for increased participation in advocacy, reference groups etc.

ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID)* will employ a dedicated advocacy/policy officer to ensure that the voice of people with intellectual disability is heard especially in relation to the Territories implementation of the DRC recommendations, NDIS reforms and the various ACT Government disability strategies.

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ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID) will continue to advocate for and provide training in supported decision making through free workshops, training, mentoring and resources. ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability (DSID)* will continue to offer information, referrals, capacity building activities, workshops and a range of other services funded by ILC grants and general fundraising.*

**ACT Down Syndrome Association Inc successfully voted to change its name to ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability on 1 December 2023. The Constitution was also changed to reflect the new name and ensure that all people with intellectual disabilities and their families have equal rights within the organisation. The name change process will be complete early in 2024.*

Sustainable and improved inclusion of women and gender diverse people with disabilities in policy and advocacy (Women with Disabilities ACT)

What: An additional **$200,000** 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.

Rationale: The ACT is undergoing a period of significant disability policy reform, with the development and implementation of numerous disability strategies and action plans, the ACT Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review, and further policy and legislative changes expected including the Disability Inclusion Act.

It is essential that women and gender diverse people (women*) with disabilities are included in consultation and co-design processes arising from these policy reforms. However, women* with disabilities must be adequately resourced to meaningfully participate in these processes. The demand for consultation and expertise over the past few years has far outweighed WWDACT's organisational capacity to participate and give meaningful feedback. Additional resources are needed to ensure we can give well-researched feedback and engage with our membership and community so we can adequately represent the views of women* with disabilities in the ACT as their representative Disabled Person's Organisation (DPO).

Currently, our Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), made up of 5-7 women* with disabilities, is an integral program for the organisation to regularly engage with our members as we participate in government and policy consultation processes. The PAC have participated in training and skill development – and are supported and renumerated for their contributions to consultations. Recurrent funding is needed to ensure the PAC's future and to ensure more women* with disabilities are resourced and upskilled to contribute to policy consultations.

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