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## To work towards a fully inclusive community for people with disabilities, the ACT Government must:

* Follow through on all commitments in the [Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029](https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1397924/Disability-Justice-Strategy_v2.pdf).
* Develop and publish the ACT Disability Strategy and ACT Disability Health Strategy.
* Meaningfully consult with the community in developing the ACT Inclusive Education Strategy.
* Implement recommendations from the [Inquiry into Long COVID and Repeated COVID Infections](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Health_Aged_Care_and_Sport/LongandrepeatedCOVID), and continue funding proactive public health measures to protect medically vulnerable people.
* Commit funding to ending restrictive practices and meet Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) obligations in all congregate living situations in the ACT including in aged care facilities.
* Act on recommendations arising from the [Inquiry into prohibited restrictive practices](https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/defining-prohibited-practices).
* Improve access to justice for people with disability and older people by funding the expansion of individual advocacy supports and community legal services.
* Ensure ongoing funding for community transport to meet demand.
* Properly fund the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme by removing the trip limit and increasing the monetary cap to keep pace with increases in taxi fares.
* Commit to all new residential properties in the ACT being built to meet and exceed the Universal Design standards as agreed in the National Construction Code.
* Prioritise funding to improve school infrastructure to support inclusive education.
* Reduce institutionalisation and segregation: commit to a target to reduce the number of people in congregate living situations and special education. Work towards eliminating segregated education settings.
* Increase and improve holistic support for families with children with disability including services to support early screening and identification.
* Meet the needs of women with disability experiencing violence, abuse or assaults including upgrading ACT women’s crisis shelters to improve accessibility.
* Address mental illness in people with disability through targeted initiatives.
* Fully fund the second ACT Carers Strategy Action Plan.

## The Justification

* Adults with disabilities are significantly less likely to report experiencing good or excellent health at 24%, compared to 65% of people without disabilities.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* In 2018, 19.4% of Canberra people had a disability. This has increased from 16.2% in 2015.[[2]](#footnote-3)
* As of 31 December 2022, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) stated that there are 9,793 active NDIS participants in the ACT, a 13% increase since early 2021.[[3]](#footnote-4)
* The rate of disability generally increases with age.[[4]](#footnote-5) The ACT is expected to experience a significant ageing of our population. The number of Canberrans aged 85 years and over is expected to increase by 509%, reaching a total of 22,500 persons in 2056.[[5]](#footnote-6)
* 47% of adults with disability have experienced violence after the age of 15, compared with 36% without disability.[[6]](#footnote-7)
* In their [*Realising our right to live independently in the community*](https://pwd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PWDA-Sub-DRC-Group-Homes-June-2020.pdf) report, People with Disabilities Australia (PWDA) state: “Research and numerous inquiries have shown that people with disability are more likely to be exposed to violence, abuse and neglect from disability support providers, people who are paid to provide support, and other residents, particularly in congregate residential settings.”[[7]](#footnote-8)
* Over 2.6 million Australians identify themselves as carers. A high majority of carers are women, and carers are more likely to be living on low incomes than non-carers.[[8]](#footnote-9)
* The ACTCOSS report[*Imagining Better: Reflections on access, choice and control in ACT health services for people with disability*](https://www.actcoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/publications/2019-report-imagining-better-act-health-services-for-people-with-disability.pdf)showed that people with disability self-report poor health outcomes arising from a mixture of:
  + Economic disadvantage
  + Diagnostic overshadowing (where a person’s disability is treated as the problem rather than a person’s presenting medical condition)
  + Poor attitudes, including a lack of a social model for responding to disability or health within clinical settings
  + Inappropriate digital and physical infrastructure leading to access barriers and poor communications
  + Services gaps including a lack of tailored services to help manage diagnostic conditions (i.e., to understand, treat and manage the primary and secondary health impacts of different kinds of disabilities).

## The Issues

* People with disability have been subject to increased stresses over the past several years. The pandemic has both highlighted and compounded existing issues and disadvantage of this at-risk cohort, such as access issues (including transport to vaccinations and access to PPE) and social isolation.
* The [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/) hasresurfaced trauma. This needs to be supported by adequate funding for individual advocacy as well as mental health support services. Funding also needs to be provided for measures to respond to the findings of the Royal Commission**.**
* A fully funded National Disability Strategy is required across *all* of the six Strategy streams,includinginclusive and accessible communities, economic security, personal and community support, learning and skills, and health and wellbeing. [Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031](https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/document/3106) needs to be well-resourced and followed through on.
* The [Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029](https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1397924/Disability-Justice-Strategy_v2.pdf) needs to be fully funded and implemented including through the expansion of advocacy supports and ongoing whole of government work.
* A Disability Health Strategy is needed to address poor health outcomes arising from personal and structural issues when engaging with the health system including during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* A commitment to reducing congregate settings recognises that these are places where violence and abuse occurs. People with disability should not be forced to live together just to access appropriate housing and support. Article 19 of the [*UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/united-nations-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-uncrpd#:~:text=The%20Convention%20on%20the%20Rights%20of%20Persons%20with,the%20fundamental%20human%20rights%20of%20people%20with%20disability.) requires that States recognise the equal rights of people with disabilities to live in the community with choices equal to others.[[9]](#footnote-10) The ACT Government needs to take all effective measures to ensure people can enjoy this right. This also extends to inclusive educationwhich is a right – and the right solution – to improving inclusion and equal opportunities for people with disability.

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| Delivering commitments in the ACT Parliamentary and Governing Agreement |
| The Government should prioritise commitments for people with disability and carers **under the** [**Parliamentary and Governing Agreement**](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1654077/Parliamentary-Agreement-for-the-10th-Legislative-Assembly.pdf) for this term of Government. The commitments are listed below.  ACTCOSS urges a focus on those in its primary areas of responsibility such as access to housing, health, education and justice.   * 13 Amend building legislation to set a proportion of new residential properties in the ACT built to meet Universal Design standards to make them able to be adapted and accessible to all people regardless of age, disability or other factors * 17.1 Continue delivering grants programs that support disability inclusion * 17.2 Support participants in the NDIS through the Integrated Service Response Program * 17.3 Develop and implement a disability employment strategy, to promote employment opportunities * 17.4 Progress actions under the ACT Carers Strategy * 17.5 Introduce legislation to formally recognise the essential role carers play in our community * 17.6 Develop a mentoring program and respite handbook and supports for carers * 17.7 Continue to implement the Disability Justice Strategy Action Plan and develop and implement a Disability Health Strategy * 21.1 Fully fund the ACT Carers Strategy |

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [*People with disability in Australia 2022*](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia-2022-in-brief/contents/about), Australian Government, 5 July 2022, accessed March 20 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, [*4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018*](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018), ABS, 2019, accessed 22 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. National Disability Insurance Scheme, [Quarterly Reports](https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports), NDIS, 19 May 2023, accessed 19 May 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [*Health of people with disability*](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/health-of-people-with-disability), Australian Government, 7 July 2022, accessed 22 May 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. ACT Government, [*Population Ageing in the ACT: Issues and Analysis*](http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/154162/population-ageing-ACT.pdf), ACT Government, 2010, p. 5, accessed 22 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. AIHW, People with disability in Australia, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. People with Disability Australia, [*Realising our right to live independently in the community*](https://pwd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PWDA-Sub-DRC-Group-Homes-June-2020-2021.pdf), PWDA, June 2020, p. 4, accessed 20 March 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. ABS, [*Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018*](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release), ABS, 2019, accessed 23 March 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. UN, [*Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community | United Nations*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html)accessed 2 July 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)