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ACT Health - Disability and Community Policy
via email: acthdisabilityandcommunity@act.gov.au

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Dear Disability and Community Policy Team,

Draft ACT Disability Health Strategy Feedback

The Disability Health Strategy 2023-2033 is an important milestone as an inclusive initiative that demonstrates the ACT's commitment to enhancing healthcare outcomes for people with disability. ACTCOSS, as a community sector peak body, wholeheartedly supports the Strategy's ambitious goals and guiding principles, and are eager to continue contributing to the remarkable progress it will make in achieving equitable and inclusive healthcare for people with disability in the ACT region.

The Disability Health Strategy is a significant step forward in improving healthcare provision for people with disability in the ACT. With an outcome-focused perspective that moves beyond broad principles, setting clear, measurable, and time-bound goals, accompanied by a commitment to developing action plans to achieve them, the Strategy enables tangible improvements in the provision of healthcare for people with disability. We are pleased to note the inclusion of detailed intentions for the First Action Plan as the development of this serves as the key to translating the Strategy's goals and focus areas into practical interventions for priority populations.

The outlined goals and principles of the Strategy demonstrate a strong commitment to equitable access and autonomy for people with disability. To further enhance the impact of the Strategy, we recommend expanding the inclusion of contextual information that will enable the dismantling of ableist attitudes that support structural barriers to healthcare for people with disability. This broader emphasis should encompass further detail in how the Strategy will commit to enabling healthcare provision in moving from a medical to a social model of disability.

The five focus areas of the Strategy address crucial aspects of its implementation. We highlight that the Strategy could benefit from placing a greater emphasis on the provision of culturally appropriate and gender-responsive healthcare services for people with disability from diverse backgrounds. Co-designing disability-related healthcare training, with input from people with disability and their support systems, will foster a more empathetic approach to care that supports agency and autonomy for people with disability. Additionally, data disaggregation and involving people with disabilities in research design and implementation are vital steps to understand and address healthcare disparities effectively. The Strategy rightly highlights the importance of considering the needs of all individuals, regardless of disability, and adapting healthcare services to meet these diverse needs. By prioritising integrated healthcare and healthcare navigation, the Strategy will significantly enhance the accessibility and coordination of services for people with disability.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Focus on Disability Rights and Social Model of Disability

The Strategy's outlined goals and principles show a commitment to equitable access and autonomy, and to support this commitment we recommend placing a more detailed and context-specific emphasis on dismantling ableist attitudes and addressing the social determinants of health through a transition to approaching healthcare provision with the social model of disability.

2. Promote Integrated Healthcare and Healthcare Navigation

Integrated healthcare and healthcare navigation play a vital role in improving accessibility and coordination of services for people with disability. Ensuring that the Strategy's messaging is consistently clear and adapting services to meet diverse needs will lead to better healthcare outcomes for all individuals, regardless of disability. Emphasising these aspects will further strengthen the Strategy's impact and its ability to create positive change in the lives of those it serves.

3. Establish a Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

To ensure the ongoing effectiveness and accountability of the Strategy, we recommend establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should incorporate clear indicators, benchmarks, and data collection methods to track the Strategy's progress over time. Regular monitoring will enable stakeholders to assess whether the Strategy is meeting its intended goals and objectives. By gathering data on key performance metrics, healthcare outcomes, and the experiences of people with disability, decision-makers can identify areas of success and areas that require improvement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Devin Bowles'.

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