

Suzanne Orr MLA
ACT Minister for Disability
Legislative Assembly ACT
Via email: orr@act.gov.au

Cc: Anne-Maree Sabellico
Deputy Director-General
Community Services Directorate
Via email: annemaree.sabellico@act.gov.au

Cc. Ellen Dunne
Executive Branch Manager, Inclusion and Participation
ACT Office For Disability
Via email: ellen.dunne@act.gov.au

Dear Minister Orr

Implementation of ACT COVID-19 Disability Strategy

ACTCOSS has joined with disability representative organisations and service providers to write to you about the implementation of the ACT COVID-19 Disability Strategy (the Strategy).

People with disabilities and organisations are keen for the Strategy to be implemented through the announcement of details, investments and actions – through a publicly available action plan – to deliver its goals and objectives.

We understand that an announcement may be imminent but this has taken longer than we would have liked.

We welcomed last month's release of the Strategy and its principles, goals and objectives. The Strategy highlights issues and policy objectives for the support of people with disabilities, carers and families that have our broad support.

We have also appreciated the regular updates and engagement of the Office for Disability since the Strategy was released. Furthermore, we value the tools and information made available for people with disability since the Strategy was launched.

We hope that the implementation of the Strategy will prioritise:

- Engagement by Canberra Health Service with people with disability on access to the health system and health system planning
- Adequate housing
- Supports to assist people to stay connected

- Mental health supports
- Financial assistance and stimulus measures
- Assistance for carers including respite
- Guidance and assistance to enable returns to face to face and/or sustained safe modified delivery
- Actions to ensure people are safe from violence and neglect
- Access to non-COVID-19 related healthcare and supports.

We would ask that community sector organisations be consulted on the release of this action plan and on an ongoing basis as implementation progresses.

The strategy must be implemented in a timely way noting the immediacy of needs of people with disability because of COVID-19.

The current period of relaxation of restrictions should also be used to ensure our planning for responses in the event there is additional community transmission, and for future disaster and pandemic planning, is thorough and human rights-based for people with disabilities. For example, by ensuring human rights-based access to healthcare, especially critical care as well as adequate supplies of PPE for services and individuals.

This letter is supported by People With Disabilities ACT, National Disability Services ACT, Carers ACT, Women with Disabilities ACT, Advocacy for Inclusion ACT, ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service and the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT.

ACTCOSS convenes a weekly online meeting on disability issues in COVID-19 and you would be welcome to attend one of these to discuss the community's priorities. These are held at 1.30pm on Tuesdays. Please note you can discuss this letter with me on 0424 910 617 or Craig Wallace, Policy Manager on 0477 200 755.

Yours sincerely



Dr Emma Campbell
Chief Executive Officer

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10 June 2020