

**Carers ACT Response to the ACT Government Disability Inclusion Statement  
Consultation Paper  
15 May 2015 – online response**

**About Carers ACT**

Carers ACT is the recognised expert voice with, and for, carers in the ACT. It is the major provider of carer services to people who provide unpaid care and support to a family member or friend with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue, or who is frail aged.

Carers ACT is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider and auspices the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres in the ACT and Southern Highlands. Through its Branch Out Disability Services people with disability and caring families can access a range of services, including respite at the Isaacs Cottage.

There are over 43,000 unpaid carers in the ACT.

**Question 1: What do you think of the proposed vision for the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement 2015-17 (Statement)? Do you have suggested changes?**

Carers ACT welcomes this ACT Government initiative to have a more inclusive Canberra that provides social and economic engagement for people with disability. We recognise that the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement is aspirational and that much needs to happen within the community for inclusion of people with disability to become a reality.

As the ACT Government states in its consultation paper:

*“To reach their full potential, people with and without disability need welcoming and supportive communities, accessible environments and access to opportunities to participate socially and economically. The NDS [National Disability Strategy] sets out to achieve this by establishing a ten-year shared agenda to promote an inclusive Australian society.*

*The Statement will guide government, together with business and the community, to consider the needs and rights of people with disability. It will provide the framework to change attitudes and generate action to achieve an inclusive and equitable Canberra community.”*

Even with increased good will and commitment by business, organisations, neighbourhood bodies and individuals in our community the ACT Government will be critical to the Inclusion Statement’s vision and its aims being achieved. The government that will be pivotal in supporting the necessary infrastructure for inclusion to occur – this may be through government-funded programs, joint ventures or providing incentives for organisations or individuals to offer services or goods for people with disability. For example, incentives to encourage a growth in accessible transport for people with disability to engage in employment, education or social activities and even every day activities, such

as shopping for household or personal items or attending health or therapy appointments. The current unmet need for accessible transport in the ACT, particularly with the expectations of many NDIS participants of increased community engagement, becomes a significant barrier to achieving inclusion.

While Carers ACT acknowledges the purpose of the proposed ACT Disability Inclusion Statement is to achieve an inclusive and equitable community in Canberra, we also know that for many people with disability – across all ages and life stages – their carers and caring families have provided essential support for their children, partners or other family members with disability. This is often detrimental to their own social and economic participation, and their own health and wellbeing. Even with an NDIS individual funded package many participants will still need to rely on the support of their primary carer and caring family. This has been estimated to be between 60-80 per cent of the support participants will require.

The draft ACT Disability Inclusion Statement and Consultation Paper do not identify this relationship, even though at least one document cited in the Inclusion Statement's Consultation Paper identifies the interrelated relationship between people with disability and their families (i.e SHUT OUT).

**Question 2: What do you think of the proposed principles? Do you have suggested changes?**

Carers ACT supports the proposed principles. We note that some of the principles e.g

- Everyone has the opportunity to participate in our great Canberra community.*
- With the right support, everyone can participate economically and socially as full citizens in the community.*
- Everyone benefits when the environments in which we work, live and play are inclusive.*

are also applicable to carers and caring families. Their realisation will also increase inclusion and have the potential to improve economic, social and health outcomes for carers and caring families.

**Question 3: What do you think of the proposed priority areas?**

Carers ACT supports the proposed priority areas. However, because of factors outside the sole control and responsibility of the ACT Government proposed priority areas e.g 'Increased access to affordable and accessible housing' or 'More jobs and opportunities to grow and develop' are not likely to be realised within a 12 months period so we recommend linkages or a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on progress be built into the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement framework at the end of the relevant identified time period.

Perhaps the inclusion of a target number or percentage for each proposed priority area would be a better indicator of realistic achievements through the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement. This would also help the ACT Government's reporting back to the community and its commitment to achievements through the Inclusion Statement.

**Question 4: What do you think of the proposal to create a social movement to encourage people with and without disability, community organisations, industry and Government to act together to change negative attitudes and take action?**

Carers ACT supports this proposal. One strategy to engage the community in a social movement could be to identify what is disability and who does the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement include. The Inclusion Statement groups people with disability as one, when we know that people with autism and acquired brain injury or cognitive disability are among the highest percentage of people with disability, although their disability is not as obvious to the community as a person with physical disability. It may be helpful for the ACT Disability Inclusion Statement's strategy to create a social movement to engage representatives or 'champions' of different disability conditions that may increase awareness of disability and encourage commitment by more people in the community, including community organisations, neighbourhoods, schools, sporting bodies and industry. This could also be incorporated into the proposed social campaign.

**Question 5: What do you think of the proposed implementation approach through social campaigns? Do you have any suggested changes or evidence based alternatives?**

We support this approach to engage the Canberra community through social campaigns. As your consultation paper indicates social campaigns, also known as social marketing campaigns in the 1990s, have been used internationally and in Australia to promote awareness of social issues and to prompt behaviour change. Although, evidence provided by some of the campaigns cited in the consultation paper report mixed results of their achievements (e.g Time to change Campaign <http://www.thelifestyleelf.net/time-to-change-stigma-and-discrimination-evaluation-results/>).

A recent national example of a social campaign was the ABC's *Mental As* Campaign as part of National Mental Health Week 2014. The *Mental As* social campaign platform incorporated radio, television, social media and well known mental health ambassadors. It featured a range of activities and downloadable podcasts and videos that were suitable for different age groups. It also sought to raise \$1 million for mental health research, and the ABC's *Mental As* webpage indicates this target was surpassed. We have anecdotal evidence of children as young as 5 years selecting and watching *Mental As* features on an iPad and increasing their understanding of mental illness and how it impacts on individuals and families.

Carers ACT supported the ACT Government's initial social campaign through social media on Saturday 9 May and looks forward to being part of the ongoing social campaign.

**Question 6: Central to the Statement is the question of how to practically enable people with disability to reach full potential. Thinking about your own, family, workplace and community, what are some practical things that have enabled you and others to reach full potential?**

Carers ACT is answering this question in relation to its own activities and support for people with disabilities and their caring families. We are aware that post school opportunities that are more than an alternative care option, such as the hospitality training opportunities provided through our Branch Out Disability Services (BODS) Cafe and its BODS Social Enterprise that provides employment pathways, are increasing inclusion for people with disability. See the BODS website ([www.branchout.org.au](http://www.branchout.org.au)) for other social activities, capacity building activities and other information about this suite of services.

Other areas that Carers ACT has included as priority systemic advocacy issues include housing pathways for people with disability (see our 2015-16 ACT Budget Submission available on

[www.carersact.org.au](http://www.carersact.org.au)), and affordable and accessible transport. Future planning programs are also an important way for people with disability and caring families to plan and set in place structures to assist people with disability reach their potential through different life stages, including transitioning to independent accommodation.

**Question 7: Which of the following campaign areas are you interested in?**

Carers ACT is answering this question in relation to its own activities and support for people with disabilities and their caring families. We believe that all areas identified are important to increase inclusion for people with disability. However, in line with some of our comments we suggest in some of these campaign areas e.g ‘Welcoming and accessible communities’ other factors are also important – adequate and accessible transport will be a key contributor to the success of this campaign area.

- jobs and opportunities to grow and develop
- affordable and accessible housing
- justice
- welcoming and accessible communities
- health

**Question 8: What are your contact details?**

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