

ADACAS Election Platform for ACT Elections 2020

ADACAS (the ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service) calls upon all political parties and candidates to commit to the following:

Emergency responses

- Ensure the human rights of people with disability, people with mental ill health, older people and carers are upheld during COVID-19 and other emergencies.
 - Maintain a straightforward, reliable and central ACT government coordination structure to ensure that people with disability, people with mental ill health, older people and carers (and the services working with them) can obtain suitable personal and protective equipment (PPE), and equitable and timely access to any supports, services and systems required to be safe and confident during an emergency. At present the needs have included access to necessities of life, healthcare and PPE, during bushfires it was smoke inhalation protections, in other emergencies there might other equipment or support/response needs.
- Make the commitment to working in partnership with people with disability, mental ill health, older people and carers and with advocacy and representative organisations to plan ahead and ensure good practice in responses to the needs of people with disability, people with mental ill health, older people and carers in case of bushfire or other emergencies.

Health and Mental Health

- Ensure equitable access to and quality of healthcare for all:
 - Develop, fund and implement a Disability Health Strategy that is co-designed by people with disabilities (in line with similar requests also from ACTCOSS, Women With Disabilities ACT, and Advocacy for Inclusion).
- Deliver a mental health system that provides quality, recovery-focussed early support, ongoing and acute care services, that are available when and as needed, and work for everyone.
 - Increase provision of services to match the volume of demand
 - Increase availability of early intervention and ongoing support services, also mental health acute care beds.
 - Increase access to and the volume and duration of support services for people with complex mental ill health, also for people with suicidal ideation and those who have attempted suicide.
 - Ensure adequate levels of both wellbeing and mental health supports are available to older people living in residential aged care in the ACT.

Child Protection

- Develop and implement a child protection system that operates in line with restorative practice principles and achieves transformative change.
 - Invest strongly in early support and fund tailored assistance for families in situations where CYPS is or might become involved. Early supports should be identified as part of a family-led process, and could involve respite, supports for parents, therapeutic supports etc.
 - Ensure that reasonable adjustments are being made to process and approach in all situations where a parent in contact with child protection has (or may have) a disability and/or mental ill health.

(Authorised by Michael Bleasdale on behalf of the ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service Inc (ADACAS) (September 2020))

- Commit to funding individual advocacy support and legal representation for parents with disability, parents with mental ill health, youth and children where there is CYPS involvement, through the entire CYPS processes (including legal processes when applicable), as per the [joint budget submission](#) by ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion.
- Fully implement the recommendations of the [Our Booris, Our Way](#) reports.
- Publish de-identified data annually about the demographics of families in contact with child protection services (including whether or not parents have disability and/or mental ill health) and clearly identify the responses being taken to ensure that any over-representation of parents with disability and parents with mental ill health in contact with child protection processes are being addressed; and that family preservation for parents with disability and parents with mental ill health is being supported to the greatest extent possible.
- Reform the CYPS internal and external review mechanisms:
 - Re-design both the internal and external review procedures to embed restorative principles. Update policies to include the right to independent support and provide sufficient funding to allow for all participants in CYPS processes to have independent support throughout.
 - Set up a multidisciplinary external review panel that includes a person with disability with lived experience of the child protection system, and where there is shared expertise in human rights, procedural fairness, natural justice, restorative practice, mental health, disability, and making reasonable adjustments.

Rights and Justice

- Increase access to rights and justice for people with disability, people with mental ill health, older people and carers.
 - Ensure that Access and Inclusion plans (co-designed with people with disability) are implemented across all government departments.
 - Commit to fully funding and implementing ACT government responsibilities under strategies, including the [National Disability Strategy](#) (priorities under the current and upcoming strategies), [Disability Justice Strategy](#), and the [Carers Strategy etc](#)
 - Fully fund the implementation of (including services and supports to accompany) legislation, such as the Crimes (offences against vulnerable people) legislation.
 - Maintain and increase funding for the [ACT Community Assistance and Support Program \(CASP\)](#) for people with disability/health issues/ mental ill health who are not eligible for the NDIS or other services.
- Invest in independent advocacy funding as a safeguard for rights.
 - Increase funding for individual advocacy to help people negotiate entry to and resolve issues with the NDIS (also with other issues as needed).
 - Boost funding for individual advocacy across all areas of advocacy. As established by a cost benefit analysis - every dollar used by Australia's independent disability advocacy agencies delivers \$3.50 in benefits ([report summary](#), [full report](#)).
- Fund a project to improve access to support and safety for people with disability and people with mental ill health experiencing violence or abuse. This project should include
 - two new senior positions: a person with disability expertise placed in specialist violence intervention service/s and a person with family and domestic violence expertise placed in a systemic disability advocacy service (that focuses on working with women) and
 - a steering group which includes people with disability who have experienced violence/abuse and
 - brokerage and case management funding

- Commit to fully implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and to working closely with ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve this and in responding to all the target areas including high priorities such as incarceration and housing.

Housing and Homelessness

- Markedly increase investment in public, community and ‘affordable rental’ housing and treat it as infrastructure vital to the health and wellbeing of the community.
 - Infrastructure investment by the ACT government should prioritise short and long-term investment in housing as a component of a revised infrastructure plan.
 - Prioritise investment in the provision of public, community and ‘affordable rental housing’ early in the next parliamentary term, to meet existing and projected demand, starting by increasing the available housing stock by at least 250 properties a year over the next 4 years.
- Commit to adopting construction regulations requiring all new residential properties being built in the ACT to meet universal design standards (a minimum of [Livable Housing Design Guidelines](#) Gold Standard), so that all new housing is designed to meet the needs of the community and can be accessible to everyone, regardless of age, disability or other factors. Commit also to supporting the same reforms being incorporated into the National Construction Code.
- Develop a subsidy program or alternate mechanism to encourage additional availability of rental properties that are accessible to [Livable Housing Design Guidelines](#) Gold standard.
- Strongly increase investment in housing first programs and homelessness response services commensurate with the level of need.
- Invest in and significantly expand the availability of suitable accessible crisis, refuge and emergency housing options for people experiencing violence or abuse including people with disability, people experiencing mental ill health, older people and carers. (In line with calls from YWCA and WWDACT)

Additional Information:

Emergency responses and Human Rights

As a human rights jurisdiction ([ACT Human Rights Act 2004](#)), and a signatory to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability](#) (UNCRPD) and many [other international human rights conventions](#), Australia has international (and local) obligations to uphold human rights. In emergency situations, human rights should predominate, and the emphasis should be on ensuring equitable access to and quality of support. In the interim response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, the commissioners “acknowledge the work of other Royal Commissions now considering the suitability of emergency management arrangements for people in aged care and people with disability”¹. Additional preparatory work and support is needed for people who could be vulnerable to the impacts of national disasters such as bushfire (see ACTCOSS submission on [lessons learned in the bushfire season 2019-2020](#)). There continues to be much work needed to ensure that the human rights of people with disability, people with mental ill health, older people and carers are upheld during COVID ([ADACAS submission](#) to the Legislative Assembly COVID inquiry). The ACT Human Rights Commission also has provided detailed information on [human rights during COVID](#).

Health and Mental Health

A Disability Health Strategy is needed to address issues related to inequitable access to healthcare and inequitable quality of healthcare experienced by people of disability across the lifespan. We welcome the [commitments made](#) at the Health Care Consumer Association Forum to working together with people with disabilities, families, carers and key stakeholders to designing and implementing a Disability Health strategy.

In terms of mental health supports, ADACAS recognises the need for a mental health system that works for everyone. We highlight some key issues in [ADACAS submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the social and economic benefits of improving mental health](#). In a recent submission to the Royal Commission on Aged Care Quality and Safety, ADACAS especially highlights the need for additional mental health and wellbeing support for people living in aged care.

Child Protection

Transformational change is needed in the Child Protection system within the ACT. As a [Human rights jurisdiction](#), and as a signatory to the [UNCRPD](#) (and given Canberra seeks to be a [restorative city](#)), we can and must do better. For background on issues and proposed actions see the many reviews that have occurred into Child Protection in the ACT in recent times: some of the more recent including the [Our Booris Our Way review](#), the [Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT](#), the [ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services \(Part 1\)](#), the [ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services \(Part 2\)—Information Sharing under the Care and Protection System](#). The ACT’s [Towards Disability justice report](#) highlighted the need for additional data, and advocacy for parents with disability and/or mental ill health. The need for advocacy support for parents with disability was also supported in the recommendations of the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services ([Part 2](#)).

¹ Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020), *Interim Observations (31 August 2020)*, accessed via: https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2020-08/Interim%20Observations%20-31%20August%202020_0.pdf in September 2020.

Rights and Justice

For information on the experiences of people with disability as they relate to human rights, see the following:

- Disability Rights Now 2019 Australian [Civil Society Shadow Report](#) to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: UN CRPD Review 2019
- [Reviews](#) of the National Disability Strategy
- the AIHW report for [People with disability in Australia](#)
- The ACT [Disability Justice Strategy](#) provides a pathway to addressing issues that are affecting access to many different types of justice for people with disability.
- “Whatever it takes”: Access for women with disabilities to domestic and family violence services: Key findings and future directions [report](#)

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network [submission](#) to the Productivity Commission, plus the second [submission](#) from Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT (MHCC) to the Productivity Commission provides some ACT focussed information on consumer perspectives, and also ACT mental health systems and structures. We would envisage that the [Productivity Commission Report into Mental Health in Australia](#) (which at 4 September 2020, has not yet been released), will additionally provide a thorough overview of topics related to mental health need.

The National Agreement on [Closing the Gap](#) 2020 outlines priority reforms, and outcomes and targets sought by and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as does the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [Agreement](#) 2019-2028.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety: Interim Report: [Aged Care in Australia: A Shocking Tale of Neglect](#) demonstrates clearly that work is needed with all stakeholders, and across all levels of government to ensure that the rights of older people are upheld.

Housing and Homelessness

As at 3 August 2020, [Housing ACT’s public housing waiting list](#) demonstrates that there are 2488 applications for housing on the waiting list, and that people with applications listed on the standard waiting list, are waiting almost 3.5 years. The [ACT Land Release program](#) has information on current plans with regards to land releases in the ACT. The [Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2020](#) (March 2020) and the recent [Anglicare Rental Affordability snapshot update](#) (August 2020) highlights the challenges for people on the lowest incomes and shows the need for ‘affordable rental’ properties.

People who need accessible housing (for reasons of disability, age and/or mobility) can find this [difficult to find](#) in the ACT. The Australian Network for Universal Housing Design (ANUHD) [response](#) to the Consultation on the Regulatory Impact Statement Proposal to include minimum accessibility standards for all housing in the National Construction Code highlights the importance of increasing the accessibility of the built environment for all.

According to an AIHW [report](#) on Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018, women escaping violence experience an increased risk of homelessness. Accessible crisis accommodation can also be difficult to find.

ACTCOSS provides additional evidence with regards to [Housing and Homelessness](#) in the ACT.