

Action on Health

This note provides ACT-specific commentary and information on this action area from ACOSS 2019 Federal election commitment priorities.

Question: As a federal candidate, what are you proposing to do to respond to the ACT's health needs, particularly the high cost of GPs – the most expensive in the country, with the fewest bulk billing doctors – and inadequate access to preventative health services?

The facts

- The ACT has the lowest number of doctors per 100,000 people across the country; 8% of Canberrans avoided making a doctor's appointment due to the cost.¹
- 80% of diseases in the ACT are chronic conditions, which require quality support and management.²

The ACT needs investment in:

- Improving access and responsiveness of tertiary health care settings to people with disability
- Recurrent funding for the University of Canberra Public Hospital
- Preventative health services, primary care, community-based health care and wellbeing services, alcohol and other drug services, and peer support.

1 K Medina, *Canberra has a GP problem, but there could be simple solutions*, ABC News, 2019, viewed 26 April 2019, <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-03/canberra-gp-problem-solutions/10771174>>.

2 Health Care Consumers Association of the ACT, *HCCA Submission to ACT Government budget consultation 2019-20*, October 2018, p.12, viewed 26 April 2019, <<https://www.hcca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/20181031-HCCA-Submission-to-ACT-Govt-budget-consultation-2019-20.pdf>>.

Community & lived experience positions

“ACTCOSS has heard that over recent weeks one ACT peer support service had to refuse support to new clients due to increased pressures from existing clients with highly complex needs.”

— ACTCOSS ACT Budget Priorities 2019-2020.³

“I have had two occasions where I’ve been unwell and I think they’re going to want me to come back and I think can I budget for that? You reasonably can’t afford to be sick.”

— A person with a disability who spoke to ACTCOSS about the cost barriers to health care.⁴

“Many people with mental illness cannot afford to see a private psychiatrist (\$300 is one 1/3 of the DSP, or worse, for those receiving Newstart!) and fall through the cracks.”

— A person who spoke to ACTCOSS about the high costs of mental health practitioners and medication.⁵

Further reading

- [ACTCOSS 2019-2020 ACT Budget Priorities](#), November 2018

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ACTCOSS is committed to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past and present.

ACTCOSS represents not-for-profit community organisations and advocates for social justice in the ACT.

3 ACTCOSS, *Submission on ACT Budget Priorities 2019-2020: Community Sector Priorities*, ACTCOSS, November 2018, p. 14, <<https://www.actcoss.org.au/budgetsub2019-20>>.

4 ACTCOSS, *Imagining Better: Reflections on access, choice and control in ACT health services for people with disability*, Unreleased report of the Appreciative Inquiry Project supported by the ACT Office for Disability, 2018.

5 *ibid.*