

# Reform to Government Advisory Structures

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

**Question:** What are your reflections on ACOSS priorities to sustain and ensure community-controlled ACT peak bodies, including self-determination for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples? As a candidate do you feel the community needs a greater local voice in Commonwealth policy and program initiatives and how might you work to achieve that?

## The facts

- *Stories of Transition* developed by ACTCOSS highlighted the effects of short term or inconsistent policy and program priorities on ACT community services.<sup>1</sup>
- The Commonwealth has signalled intent to move in and out of funding for social infrastructure areas like housing, disability, legal services and even volunteering – sometimes within the space of a few months. Programs have been abolished, tendered or slated for abolition only to be reinstated. Others have been placed on precarious annual contracts, living year from year and unable to plan.
- The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) is a representative body established in 2008. The federal government has rejected the recommendation included in the Uluru Statement from the Heart for a national representative body.<sup>2</sup>

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1 ACTCOSS, *Stories of Transition*, ACTCOSS, November 2017, <<https://www.actcoss.org.au/stories-transition>>.

2 Referendum Council, *Final Report of the Referendum Council*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, <<https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/final-report.html#toc-anchor-ulurustatement-from-the-heart>>.

- Successive rounds of cuts, significantly in 2014, have impacted local organisations. They have had to respond to significant and wide-ranging Commonwealth reform agendas in areas like housing, funding for mental health services, income support, aged care reforms and changes to families and children's services.
- ACT peak bodies have not been included in advisory on significant Commonwealth program rollouts; for example, there was no local advisory group for the NDIS. Representation from the ACT is often focussed, or perceived to be focussed, on seat of government issues, rather than local investment priorities.

## Further reading

- [Stories of Transition](#), October 2017
- [ACOSS Whole of government advisory structures – 2019 Federal Election priorities](#), March 2019

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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.