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4 January 2022

Deputy Commissioner Neil Gaughan
APM
Chief Police Officer for the ACT

Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Police and Emergency
Services

Via email: CPOACT@afp.gov.au

Via email: gentleman@act.gov.au

Dear Deputy Commissioner Gaughan and Minister Gentleman,

Re: ACT Policing Introduction of Online Reporting

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) notes the ACT Police announcement regarding the introduction of online reporting for some types of property crime.

ACTCOSS acknowledges the improved efficiency objective for ACT Police in increasing the use of online reporting. Whilst we appreciate the need for streamlining of crime response services, we are concerned by a lack of community consultation as well as the ramifications of digital reporting procedures on vulnerable community members, particularly low-income and older Canberrans.

We are disappointed by the absence of community consultation in moving towards online reporting. Given the significant consequences of altering reporting structures, community involvement in decision making is imperative to ensuring safety and security. ACTCOSS encourages greater consultation in the implementation of this change as well as future decision-making.

A community consultation process would ensure that not only the will of the ACT at large is considered but also that care and consideration is taken to address the specific needs of vulnerable Canberrans. ACTCOSS is concerned that there are many people for whom digital reporting is inaccessible and exclusionary.

Where community members do not have the resources or ability to access the necessary technology and internet infrastructure for online reporting, they are essentially discouraged from reporting property crime at all. This is particularly the case for older Canberrans, people with disabilities, low-income households, survivors of domestic and family violence, culturally and linguistically diverse people and those experiencing homelessness.

Those who are most likely to be disadvantaged by online reporting are amongst the ACT's most vulnerable and are likely also those who already struggle to access a broader spectrum of available reporting options. We recommend that steps be taken to recognise and redress the inaccessibility of online reporting for many community members.

Community safety must begin with centring the needs of the most vulnerable.

We appreciate your efforts to improve efficiency and user-friendliness in accessing ACT Policing services. ACTCOSS would be more than happy to support future efforts to conduct meaningful community consultation. For further discussion, please feel free to contact me on 0424910617, or via the email address below.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Campbell." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Emma Campbell
Chief Executive Officer

ceo@actcoss.org.au