



ACT Council of Social Service Inc.
Annual Report

2018-19



Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respect to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and their ongoing contributions to the ACT community.

Please note:

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain the images and names of people who have passed.

Alliances & partners

We would like to thank our allies, partners and supporters who have worked with us to make experts, advice, training, resources and research more accessible and affordable to community organisations and helped extend the reach of our advocacy:



Gallagher



Hands Across Canberra
Your Community Foundation



THE MILL HOUSE
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACCELERATOR

tccGROUP
solutions for social impact

ashurst



ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Woden Community Service
working together, enriching lives



UNSW
SYDNEY

SPRC
Social Policy Research Centre

NATSEM
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

CarersACT

Ngunnawal Bush
Healing Farm



ACT
Government
Health

Dhunlung Yarra Service



Artist: Buddha Connors

What is the ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)?

ACTCOSS is a non-profit organisation that advocates for social justice and assists and supports the community sector in the ACT. We do this with support and input from our members – passionate individuals, community-managed organisations and other groups interested in a fair Canberra.

Vision

Our vision is that Canberra is a just, safe and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

Objectives

- **Build capacity:** We assist and support organisations to build their capacity so they can provide a service that best meets the needs of Canberrans living in difficult circumstances.
- **Promote social justice:** We make explicit and pursue a social justice agenda for the people of the ACT.
- **Be an effective peak body:** We function as a peak body for the ACT community sector.
- **Strengthen the COSS network:** We participate as part of the national Councils of Social Service (COSS) network.

Want to know more?

Continue reading this report to get an idea about how we make a difference – and how you can join us to make a difference too! There are lots of opportunities for us to work together for positive social change.

You can also find out more on our website actcoss.org.au

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Chair's report



Glenda Stevens
Chair

Associate Member
of ACTCOSS

This year, ACTCOSS has continued its vital work towards making Canberra a just, safe and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

With the objectives in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan as our guiding principles, ACTCOSS has made respectable progress in building capacity, promoting social justice, being an effective peak body, and strengthening the COSS network. To note, ACTCOSS has:

- Represented the views and priorities of our constituency and members, and influenced public debate through submissions to the ACT Government on energy hardship, Moving Canberra, choice and control in ACT health services for people with disability, adoption reform, and the ACT's Digital Strategy
- Participated as part of the national COSS network, and made significant progress in raising awareness of the need to increase Centrelink benefits, particularly Newstart payments
- Held a pre-election forum for ACTCOSS members and federal candidates; and a post-budget forum for members and ACT ministers and government
- Continued its deep involvement in reconciliation and Anti-Poverty Week
- Emphasised what will be needed for the ACT to be a sustainable, inclusive community, especially as the population is growing quickly.

In 2018, to ensure ACTCOSS is an effective peak body, the Committee commissioned two reviews of its effectiveness and governing documents. This year, the Committee devoted considerable time to assessing and implementing recommendations from the reviews. Of significance are the changes made to the ACTCOSS Constitution, which included the Committee be known as a Board, the President to be known as Chair, and the Director be known as a Chief Executive Officer. The final recommendations were approved at the Special General Meeting held in September 2019. I sincerely thank all who were involved in bringing these changes to fruition: the staff, the Board and ACTCOSS members. Everyone generously gave their time, thought, knowledge, heart, and honesty to the process that will help sustain the organisation.

As I complete my first year as Chair, I would like to thank the ACTCOSS staff for their expertise and perseverance. Our proactive policy and advocacy work are influencing government, while the capability team is bringing together resources that strengthen and build capacity in not-for-profit organisations across the ACT. As resourcing for not-for-profit organisations is becoming more restricted, ACTCOSS has and will continue to work to ensure organisations are sustainable and effective in delivering services to the community.

Particularly, I thank our CEO, Susan Helyar. This has been Susan's sixth year with ACTCOSS. Susan has been an articulate 'face of ACTCOSS' and has positioned the organisation to be a recognised authority on social justice issues.

I also sincerely thank my Board colleagues for their collective and individual wisdom, and the members of ACTCOSS for their generous support and commitment to ACTCOSS's work to alleviate poverty and inequality and to effect positive social change.

CEO's report



Susan Helyar
Chief Executive Officer
ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS is proud of our contribution to building social capital in the Canberra community. As a membership-based and member-led organisation, we see social capital as an essential foundation for social change. We work hard to grow the ties between ourselves and our members, discern shared norms, values and priorities, and develop relationships of trust in the community and with decision makers. This report provides a snapshot of the focus areas and impacts of our social capital building work.

During this year, we celebrated significant progress on our multi-year sector-wide campaign on housing and homelessness. In October 2018, the Minister for Housing announced \$100 million would be spent on increasing supply of public housing and renovating existing housing to improve diversity of housing types, quality and suitability for tenants. The ACT Government also committed 15% of its annual Indicative Land Release Program to growing the supply of public, community and affordable purchase homes including green field or urban renewal sites. ACTCOSS members, peak bodies, supporters in the construction and property sector, opinion shapers in the media and everyday Canberra voters all had a vital role to play in this campaign.

The policy team developed 23 submissions and reports that presented unique information into public debate, Legislative Assembly inquiries and public policy decision-making processes. The knowledge, insights and compelling voice of people with a direct experience of discrimination, exclusion and/or stigma, and the advice of ACTCOSS member organisations working to prevent, respond to and support recovery from adversity, ensured our advocacy was well informed and credible.

Our capability team worked with members and peak bodies to inform ACT Government officials of challenges and risks in the operating environment, with a significant focus on the growing gap between the full cost of service delivery (including workforce, consumables, evaluation, facilities, fleet and ICT), the base funding provided and the indexation of funding. We also worked together with colleagues to inform development of more contemporary, fit-for-purpose approaches to designing, commissioning, regulating and measuring outcomes of services delivered in the community. The ACT Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-2026 continues to provide a clear framework for our advocacy on, and ACTCOSS services to support, workforce and organisation development so we collectively build a service system that meets the needs of current and future Canberrans.

Like many community organisations, we have spent down our reserves to invest in capability and infrastructure that grows the effectiveness, transparency and connectedness of our work. The operations team has led adoption of new software and hardware that enabled ACTCOSS to improve the efficiency of our back-office functions so we can spend more staff time on our advocacy agenda. This work has also improved the quality of our publications and communication with different stakeholders.

Thank you to all the people and organisations that have been part of our social change work in 2018-19. Our voice is stronger and our impact is greater because we work together.

Our people

Samantha Quimby
Capability Manager



Ryan Joseph
Capability Officer

Tara Prince
Policy & Development Officer

Capability team

Kim Peters
Program Officer
(from Sep 2018)



Julie Butler
Program Officer

Gulanga Program team



Lyn Peacock
Program Officer
(until Sep 2018)



Susan Helyar
CEO

Geoff Buchanan
Senior Policy Officer
(Research & Data)



Eliza Moloney
Policy Officer

Craig Wallace
Policy Manager

Policy team

Kathy Ehmann
Admin Support Officer
(from Aug 2018)



Holly Zhang
Info & Events Support
Officer
(from Aug 2018)

Stephanie Crosby
Operations Manager

Suzanne Richardson
Publications & ICT Officer

Operations team



Elizabeth Rose
(Aug-Dec 2018)



Carmel Sefian
(Aug-Dec 2018)



Vony Ramadhani
(Mar-May 2019)

Interns

Financial statements

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2019

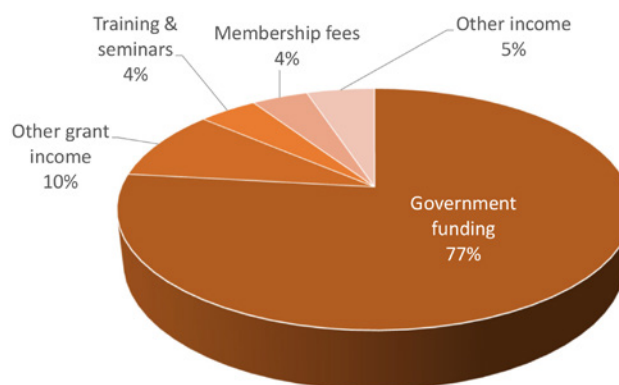
	2019 \$	2018 \$
Grant funding	1,117,514	1,139,828
Other income	166,000	185,563
Finance income	11,566	16,303
Total revenue	1,295,080	1,341,694
Employee expenses	(1,026,747)	(959,496)
Accounting fees	(9,402)	(21,950)
Depreciation	(4,389)	(2,674)
External labour & consulting	(112,985)	(233,762)
Meeting & seminars	(24,224)	(48,515)
Publication costs	(4,168)	(16,697)
Rent	(29,229)	(28,591)
Other expenses	(86,195)	(69,564)
Total expenditure	(1,297,339)	(1,381,249)
Deficit from operations	(2,259)	(39,555)
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(2,259)	(39,555)

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2019

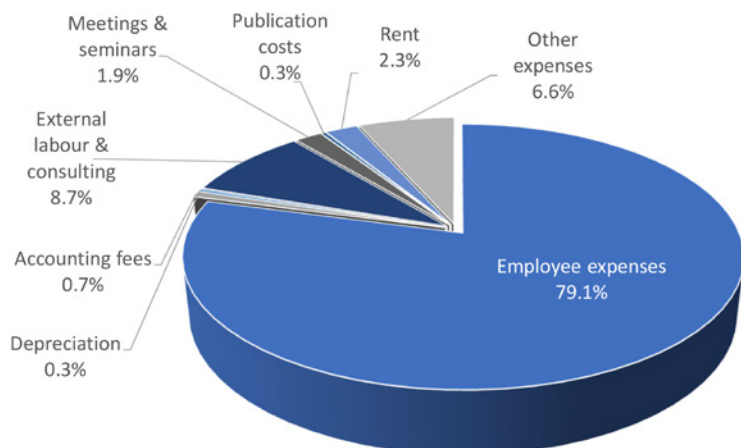
	Retained surplus \$	Operating reserve \$	Total \$
2019			
Balance at 1 July 2018	57,873	322,688	380,561
Comprehensive income attributable to members	(2,259)	-	(2,259)
Balance at 30 June 2019	55,614	322,688	378,302
2018			
Balance at 1 July 2017	97,428	322,688	420,116
Comprehensive income attributable to members	(39,555)	-	(39,555)
Balance at 30 June 2018	57,873	322,688	380,561

Find the [full financial report for 2018-19](#) on the ACTCOSS website: actcoss.org.au

2018-19 ACTCOSS income



2018-19 ACTCOSS expenditure



Your membership fees make a difference

Once again, ACTCOSS would like to thank all our members for your ongoing collaboration and financial support. The money we receive through membership fees enables ACTCOSS to undertake work that we wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

Your membership fees in 2018-19 helped us fund:

election forum



A federal election candidates forum with a focus on voter-initiated dialogue with candidates on local concerns. Find out more on [page 18](#).



new report

A report exploring the costs of gambling harm to the Canberra community and the resilience of people who experience harm and come back. Find out more on [page 21](#).

our strat plan



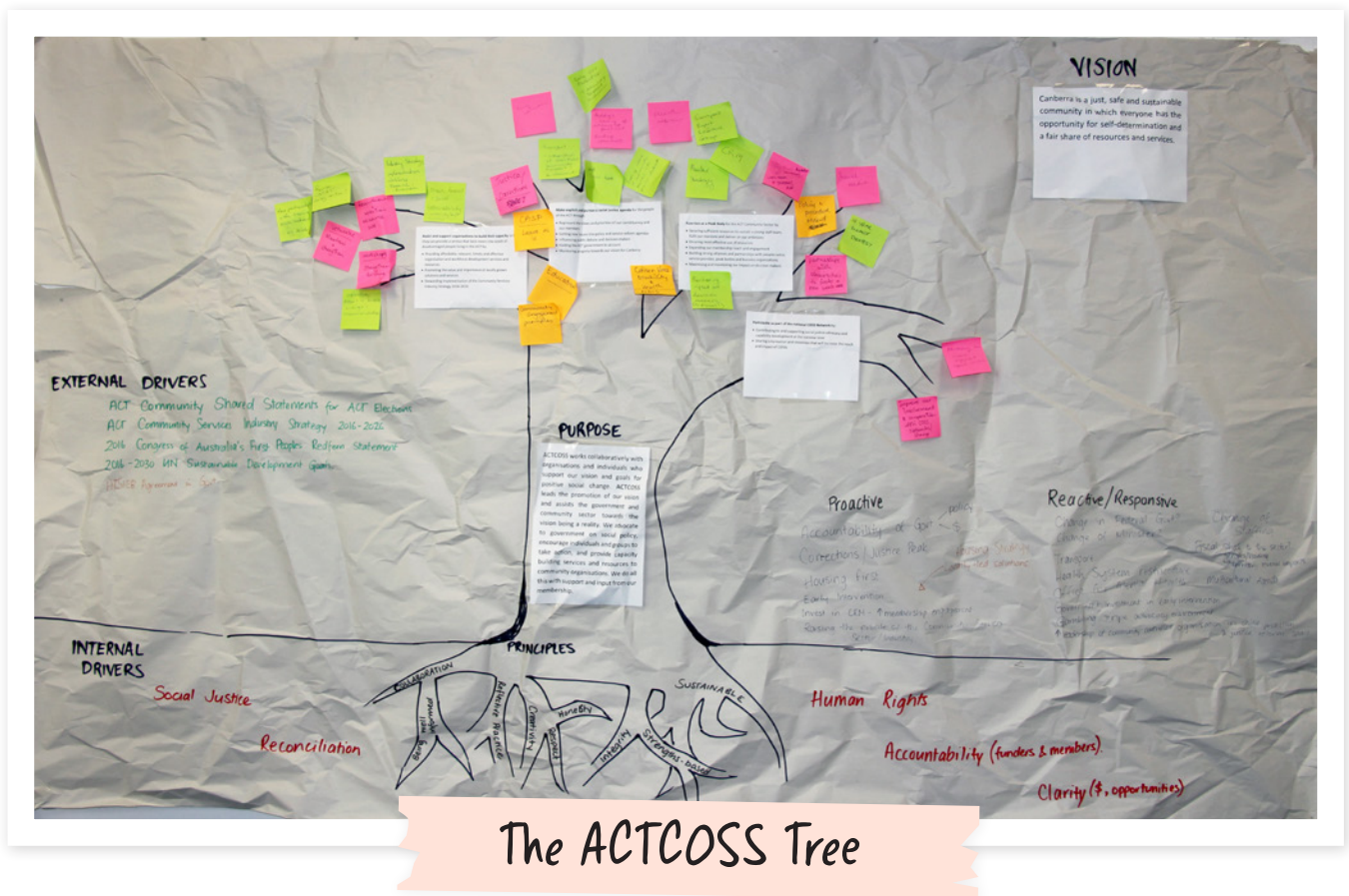
Professional assistance to develop our new strategic plan through forums, surveys and workshops. Find out more on [page 9](#).



A license to provide the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT), an online tool that measures your nonprofit's effectiveness. Find out more on [page 35](#).

Strategic Plan 2019-2022

In November 2018, we launched our Strategic Plan 2019-2022 at our Annual General Meeting. The development of the plan was a collaborative effort amongst the Board, members and staff of ACTCOSS.



The staff workshop for developing the strategic plan was based on the concept of ACTCOSS being a well-established tree that continues to grow.

We are an evergreen species, sprouting new leaves each year, which represent the topics on which we advocate year in, year out. And just like trees turn carbon dioxide into oxygen, we absorb ideas and

emerging issues from the atmosphere and then emit research and analysis, make submissions to decision-making processes, share ACTCOSS views with media and in parliamentary debates to get information into the political atmosphere. This increases awareness of, and inspires action on, social justice issues.

RAISE THE RATE

This was the year the voices of people on Newstart and other allowances finally became audible in public debate – about the need to raise the rate of these payments by \$75/week. ACTCOSS contributed to this breakthrough by including #RaiseTheRate messages in major publications and every email from our office.

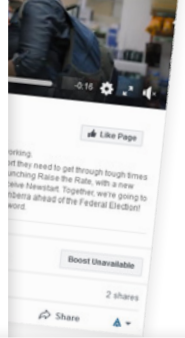
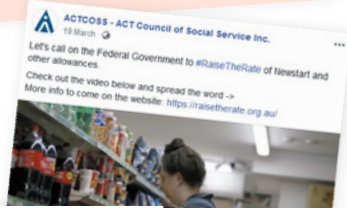
We also painted signs, donned T-shirts, briefed politicians and candidates, signed up supporters at the 2018 Union Picnic Day, wrote submissions, held a Canberra Show stall and handed out fliers, all while building bridges with other COSS and allies across the nation.

In the ACT, our campaign gained momentum with us distributing a powerful report, *What We Heard*, in closed briefings for MLAs and their staff. This report shared insights from Canberrans with real life experience of living on inadequate income support payments.

Neither Labor nor the Coalition made a direct promise during the federal election in May 2019 regarding raising Newstart and other allowances. But the push now grows ever louder from right across the community, including ACTCOSS members, business leaders, unions, academics and unemployed workers, that it's time to take action to raise the rate and change the lives and future opportunities of the 10,000 people in our city who receive Newstart and other allowances.



“\$75 extra a fortnight would’ve kept me above not eating for three days while I was pregnant.”
 – Young Canberra woman who contributed to our ‘What We Heard’ briefing



Join the campaign to Raise the Rate of Newstart

Contact your local MPs and senators and tell them that Newstart isn't working: raisetherate.org.au

Share the word on social media: #RaiseTheRate



ACT Council of Social Service
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 e actcoss@actcoss.org.au
 a 1/6 Gritten St, Weston A
 abn 81 818 839 988



ACTCOSS represents not-for-profit community organisations and advocates for social justice.
actcoss.org.au | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | **Raise the Rate! [Join the campaign to get Newstart working!](#)**

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

Justice

The Justice Reform Group (JRG) is an important space for open, collaborative discussion on a closed space in the ACT: the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC).

Since reconvening in 2017, the JRG has grown to involve a wide range of organisations involved in service delivery and advocacy in the ACT. JRG meetings are a lively space, connecting people working in a sector that don't often have opportunities to come together to share ideas and build bridges.

In 2018 and 2019, the JRG met with:

- The Office for Disability, on the Disability Justice Strategy
- The ACT Inspector of Correctional Services
- Detainee Services, ACT Corrective Services
- Programs and Reintegration, ACT Corrective Services.

And we heard from a range of community services doing important work preventing contact with the justice system and working with people who are in contact with the justice system.

Towards the end of 2018, restorative justice and justice reinvestment became widely discussed topics in the ACT. ACTCOSS was a partner in the 'Building Communities, Not Prisons' conference, and we were pleased to see Minister Rattenbury announce funding for several justice reinvestment activities in the community and in the AMC.

Many of the announcements delivered on what ACTCOSS has advocated for over many years: a shift from building prisons and resourcing imprisonment, to resourcing programs that focus on reducing crime and improving community safety through prevention, diversion and reducing recidivism.

ACTCOSS will continue to facilitate the JRG, providing an information loop between government and community. We will enable community sector expertise to contribute to ensuring that the AMC is a rehabilitative, human rights compliant place of last resort. Work of the JRG also ensures that as a sector we are working effectively across roles and funding programs to address the wide array of social determinants of contact with the justice system.

What people are saying about the Justice Reform Group

"This morning was extremely useful and something I would like to attend on an ongoing basis. [I] definitely was not aware of the impact imprisonment was having upon the disability sector so definitely keen to see how we could tap into that. Thank you for having me along!"

— Woden Community Service

"Thank you for the invitation to attend the JRG yesterday. I found it to be a really interesting discussion on both topics and very useful to learn more about what is going on in this space."

— Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services

"Thank you for your write-up on the JRG meeting. It is unusual these days to get such a comprehensive and clear record of the proceedings of a meeting. I really appreciate these minutes of what was obviously an interesting and useful discussion and I'm really sorry I wasn't able to be there."

— Prisoner's Aid

"Oh I love the meeting. It really puts in the perspective as to why I love my field of work :) You are doing an amazing job whacking them together!"

— Advocacy for Inclusion

You can help with justice reform

Want to find out how your work can fit into the bigger picture in preventing contact with the justice system? Come along to the Justice Reform Group. Contact us on 02 6202 7200 or email actcoss@actcoss.org.au.

Affordable housing

This year saw significant delivery on affordable housing after a long campaign spearheaded by ACT Shelter and ACTCOSS, and supported by our members, community peak bodies and partners in the business sector.

On 29 October 2018, the Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA and Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Yvette Berry MLA released an ACT Housing Strategy. The strategy included \$100 million investment in public housing over five years to deliver at least 200 new homes and renewal of a further 1,000 homes. The strategy also included a target setting aside 15% of government land releases for public, community and affordable housing, including infill development and new suburbs from 2019-20 onwards. Both of these commitments reflected advocacy goals of our campaign.

Following the announcement, ACTCOSS analysed where the strategy had met or exceeded community expectations as well as where additional effort, transparency and oversight are required to meet strategy goals and make a difference to low-income renters. We're working to hold government to account and more recently we have been highlighting the importance of maintaining affordable housing in locations with high amenity in terms of transport, employment opportunities and social infrastructure. We continue to advocate for public housing as well as community housing to be available in every suburb.

Over the coming 12 months, our work on homelessness will need to grow. Our focus will be on increasing the adoption of rapid rehousing models of care.

MY VOTE FOR HOUSING
delivering on the commitment

Some of our affordable housing campaigning since 2016

Canberra comes together for housing: an agreed way forward
A joint communique from the ACT property industry, business, community, union and professional groups have decided it's time to go on the front foot to improve housing in this city one week out from the ACT election.
Our group is comprised of the people who design, build, manage, live in and advocate for the Canberra community. We came together on Wednesday 5 October 2016 to talk about housing policy and provision in Canberra and here we set a shared agenda. We have agreed a way forward and we need the political agenda to catch up.
We are looking for the next ACT Government to work with the members of this group to respond to a **Territory wide Housing Strategy** that ensures all people in Canberra can obtain housing that is affordable, accessible, appropriate, safe and secure. In a city with a high rate of homelessness addressing housing affordability is the only real and sustainable way to reduce homelessness in the long term.
This Housing Strategy should be underpinned by contemporary, fit for purpose Planning Regulations.
Restrictive planning regulations stifle innovation and limit diversity of housing in established neighbourhoods. Lack of affordable, diverse, sustainable housing constrains economic development and reduces social well-being.
A single Minister should take responsibility for the Housing Strategy and Planning.
...the following components:

2016 joint communique from industry, business, community & others on need for housing strategy

ACT GOVERNMENT

ACT HOUSING STRATEGY
OCTOBER 2018

ACT Gov't announced housing strategy in Oct 2018 & \$100 million funding

Workforce costs & indexation gap

Community organisations are great at doing a lot with a little. But we can't continuously do a lot with an income base growing more slowly than costs, population and demand.

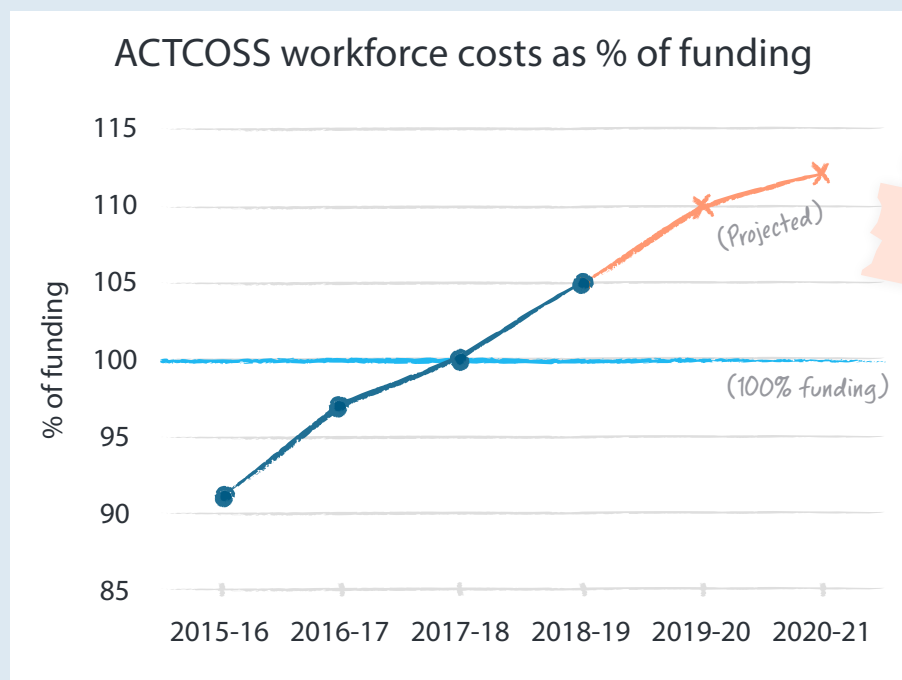
ACTCOSS has previously reported that the vast majority of organisations have diversified their funding and are growing revenue from fee-for-service and philanthropic sources. In 2018-19, we investigated whether ACT Government funding was keeping up with costs. Our findings confirmed our experience and what members had been telling us – despite substantial progress on improving business efficiency, there was a growing gap between government program funding and meeting the costs of high quality, effective services.

Over the last seven years, the cost of wages has been increasing more rapidly than the indexation applied to government funding. The efficiency gains over the period, while substantial, have not closed the gap. The costs of delivering quality services to the community have increased and the operating environment has shifted substantially.

This was the theme of our inaugural CEO forum this year, where over 30 CEOs from community organisations came together to talk about the challenges of the current operating environment. From that forum, we have developed our messaging and the ACT Government has undertaken to agree to a methodology for service costing with the community sector.

ACTCOSS feeling the pinch too

The gap between ACTCOSS peak body funding and the associated workforce costs continues to increase.



The gap in 2020-21 will be over \$80,000.

We have managed the growing gap over the past five years by bringing in more fee-for-service income (through policy and capability partnerships) and project funding from philanthropic and government specific-purpose grants.

Strengthening social capital across community services

How do we take what we learn from our engagement activities and contribute to building the capability of the sector? How do we ensure that community service experiences of the policy and operating environment are captured and appropriately shared? By building social capital across the services system and between ACTCOSS and our member organisations!

- Our people-led peer networks – from human resources to community development – contribute to bridging social capital in our sector. They are accessible communities of interest, creating opportunities for people to engage in relationships of exchange and encourage associations between people with shared interests or goals.
- Often these peer networks articulate practitioner perspectives on current operating environment issues. When these perspectives are combined, they enrich and add nuance in various formats to our broader advocacy agenda and contribute to linking social capital in our sector.
- Taking an evidence-based approach, we work with specialists from professional services to academia to develop an accurate understanding of how existing structures and resourcing in our sector may be celebrated or better calibrated to represent current and/or future need.
- Through our member engagement that provides valuable environmental learning to inform our capability work, we develop internally our bonding capital to guide our representations to drive or mitigate changes in the broader operating environment.

What is 'social capital'?

'Social capital' is the networks of relationships in a society that enable the society to function well.

Bonding social capital: Relationships within a group, community or organisation.

Bridging social capital: Relationships between groups, communities and/or organisations.

Linking social capital: Relationships across power gradients.

For a more nuanced look at social capital, see [Functions of social capital – bonding, bridging, linking](#) by Tristan Claridge.

Our peer networks

Community Assistance & Support Program

Community Development

Human Resources

Reconciliation

Communications

Social Enterprise

Leading Social Change (for board directors)

Come along to a peer network

Are you interested in any of the peer networks listed here? You're welcome to come along. Find out more at actcoss.org.au/networks, contact us at actcoss@actcoss.org.au or call 02 6202 7200.

Industry Strategy

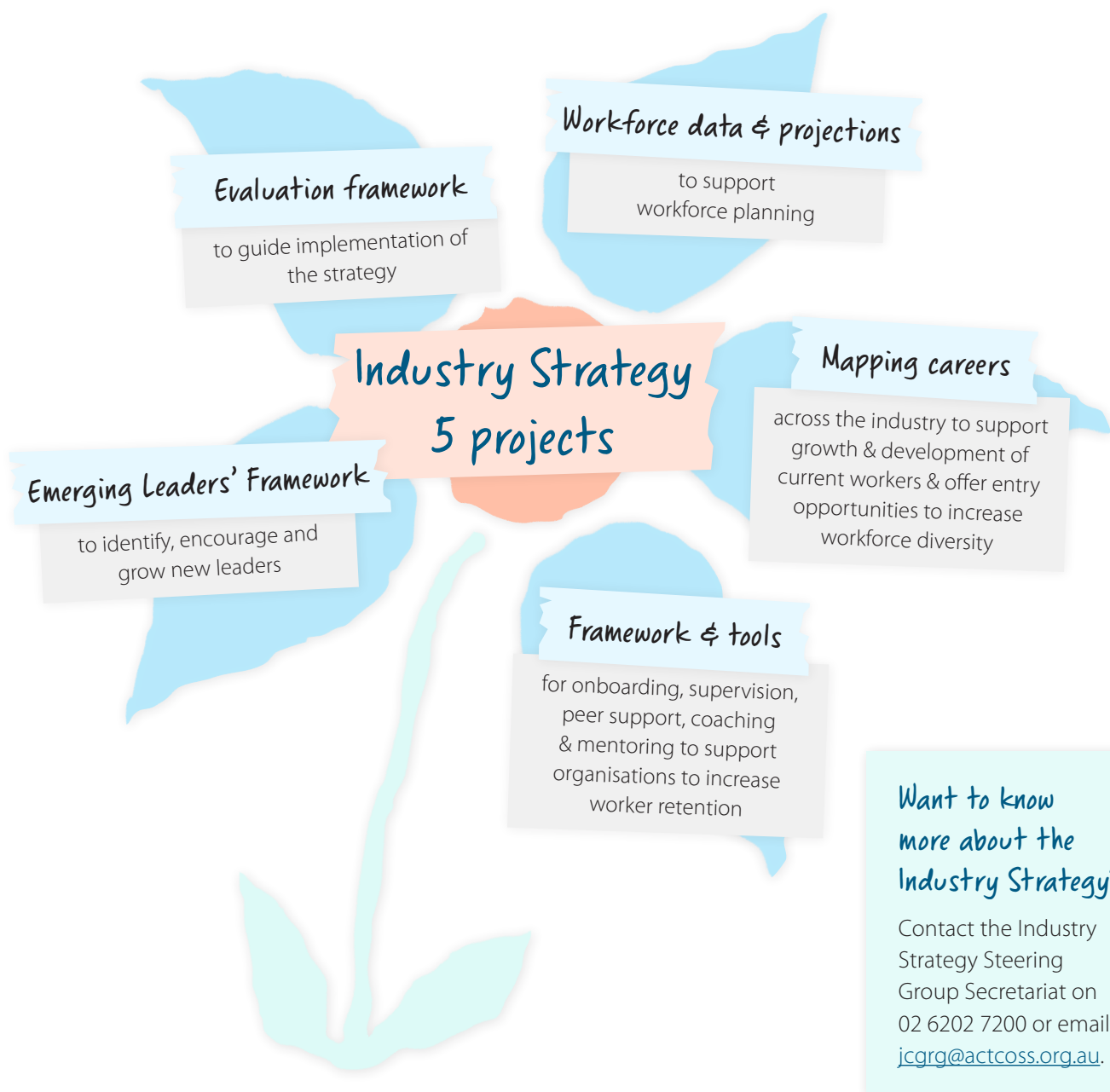
Growing and developing the industry through its people

In 2017, ACTCOSS played an important role in enabling the Joint Community Government Reference Group subcommittee, the Industry Strategy Steering Group, to engage with the wider community services industry.

ACTCOSS chaired the steering group that led the development of an initial plan under the Community

Services Industry Strategy 2016-2026, the ACT Community Services Workforce Plan 2017-2020.

In 2018-19, ACTCOSS worked with colleagues in the steering group to commission, oversee and approve final products developed in the five projects that were funded by the Community Services Levy funds remaining from 2015-2017. These five projects were:



Food security

In 2018-19, ACTCOSS received funding from the ACT Government to examine food security in the ACT. We found there were over 25,000 people experiencing food stress in Canberra. Over the past several years, providers of food assistance and emergency relief have increasingly moved beyond being merely transactional towards a more relational approach – for example, providing not just food but also referrals to, or information about, other services.

Our project looked beyond the statistics and referral data. One of our key findings was how valuable food assistance services are, not just as a source of free meals and affordable groceries, but also as a source of social connection. These services build vital social capital as places for interpersonal interaction, providing a source of social connectedness that improved people's emotional wellbeing alongside increasing their access to food.

"I go there for the food hub but I also go there to talk to the people as well ... It's a social thing ... I do spend a lot of time on my own, with the kids, so the adult sort of conversation is really nice as well... So it's kind of like you go there for the food hub but you also go there to talk to people as well ... it's sort of a community thing, which is good."

– A food hub service user

This project also highlighted how our research draws on and helps us build social capital with our members. Our research benefits immensely from the knowledge we tap into from our members, who also help connect us with people with lived experience.



"I have just read the ACTCOSS Food Insecurity report in more detail and wanted to let you know that I think it is excellent. Very well written, covers some very interesting and often not highlighted aspects of this issue and some great data."

– Woden Community Service

Adoption review

ACTCOSS values lived experience. Amplifying the voices and experiences of people who interact with the systems in need of reform is an important part of ensuring that those with decision-making power receive informed advice reflective of everyday life for people experiencing disadvantage in the ACT.

Our commitment to amplifying the voice of lived experience was integral to our response in January 2019 to the Consultation on Adoption Reform: Dispensing with Parental Consent. We knew the Discussion Paper, outlining potential reforms to dispensing with parental consent in adoptions in the ACT, would be highly relevant to our members working with children, young people and families engaged in out-of-home care (OOHC) in the ACT.

ACTCOSS compiled a detailed submission to the consultation, based on a thorough research process. Our submission incorporated insights and feedback from 20 organisations who work with people directly affected by the reforms being considered.

In doing this work, we have increased our knowledge and advocacy in the child protection space and strengthened our relationships with the organisations who gave their time to work with us. This will be a strong base to work from for the Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services.

Our work on child protection needs to grow. ACTCOSS will advocate for reforms that increase the safety of children and young people in their family and promote use of restorative practices in child and youth protection services. We will do this by amplifying the voices of people with direct experience as a child or young person, supporting members to build new partnerships and models of care that reduce the need for families to connect with OOHC and reduce the over-representation of particular population groups in the OOHC system.

Thank you

Our advocacy is strong because it is shaped by the people and organisations leading good practice and working directly with people whose lives are impacted by government policies.

Thank you to everyone who took time to share insights and advice about the adoption review, including:

- Marymead
- Parentline
- Women with Disabilities ACT (WWDACT)
- ACT Women's Health Service
- Tjillari Justice Aboriginal Corporation
- CREATE
- CARE Financial Counselling
- Red Cross
- Karinya House
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Families ACT
- Women's Centre for Health Matters (WCHM)
- SHINE for Kids
- ACT Office of Disability
- Advocacy for Inclusion
- Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee
- ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (MACW)
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

Getting the message across

Strengthening dialogue & amplifying community voices

ACTCOSS has been increasingly working to bridge gaps in understanding and engagement by amplifying citizen voice and facilitating direct dialogue between the community, politicians and other leaders.

This year we inverted the power dynamic to enable ACTCOSS members and other people who join our events to directly brief leaders on key issues, priorities and concerns.

Federal election forum

Our election forum on 29 April 2019 aimed to flip the election conversation by facilitating policy dialogue initiated by voters towards candidates on issues outside the 'Canberra bubble', like local concerns, service gaps and municipal issues.

At the forum, candidates spoke briefly about issues that they saw as priorities for investment and reform. Attendees then sat down at electorate-specific tables with candidates to advise them of the issues important to them as voters. ACTCOSS provided maps and data about each electorate to inform table discussions, including information on issues that a sample of voters themselves prioritised.

At the end of the federal election forum, we briefly invited each candidate to tell us one thing that they learnt or heard that surprised them or was likely to sustain a lasting impression if they were elected. This was [livestreamed via Facebook](#).

Afterwards, we provided a forum report and briefing materials to all candidates to help inform their policy and platform, including a summary of hot topics and points of divergence from voter priorities.



Making an impact on candidates

Candidates told us that the forum had been useful in shaping their priorities. Following the forum, ACTCOSS members told us about the number of mentions of social service priorities from the forum that they saw in candidate messaging and roadside signage.



Cross-sector networking sessions & cross-sector information sessions (Aboriginal &/ or Torres Strait Islander focus)

ACTCOSS and Woden Community Service have partnered to provide cross-sector networking sessions and information sessions with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander focus. We collaborate to create a two-way learning and networking opportunity for people working in community services and people working in Aboriginal-led community service programs or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. In 2018-19, we jointly offered eight sessions to hear from agencies and their programs, ask questions and to network with other participants.

Participants told us they value the sessions because they help build relationships between staff across different organisations and improve understanding of the operations of the presenting services.

- GIVIT | Libraries ACT (16 Aug 2018)
- Dhunlung Yarra Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Unit – Relationships Australia, Canberra Region (30 Aug 2018)
- Centrelink – Department of Human Services | OneLink (15 Nov 2018)
- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services (29 Nov 2018)

- Marymead Autism Centre | ACT Ombudsman (20 Feb 2019)
- Functional Family Therapy Program – Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation | OzChild (6 Mar 2019)
- Mental Health Services, Woden Community Service | Kippax Connections (2 May 2019)
- Community Liaison Officer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Advisor – ACT Human Rights Commission (16 May 2019).

Come along to a cross-sector network or info sessions!

These sessions are free and open to anyone interested in learning about how community services in the ACT can serve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Keep an eye out on the ACTCOSS website actcoss.org.au and our weekly eNotices (sign up: eepurl.com/bNjefr).

ACT Budget forum

Our ACT Community Sector Budget Forum on 6 June 2019 flipped the traditional format – instead of ministers talking out the front, each minister sat at a table with attendees interested in their portfolio areas. The ministers were then invited to engage directly with attendees on two or three questions relating to their portfolio responsibilities. Rather than ministers providing set piece responses to questions about the Budget, attendees and ministers were able to listen, ask follow-up questions and grow mutual understanding in a format conducive to dialogue.



Chief Minister Barr at a table with forum attendees

Amplifying lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion & stigma via our 'Stories of' publications

ACTCOSS has been working for more than three years now to capture the lived experience of people needing improved services, amenities or community responses, and using these to build bridges of empathy and understanding with people and agencies in positions of influence.

We have provided platforms for the confidentialised views of individuals and services experiencing housing stress and homelessness, service transitions, gambling harm, health system interactions, food insecurity and in receipt of Newstart and other allowances. As we focused on systemic and not individual advocacy, we accessed lived experience in a specific and limited way, usually via third parties.

Our work to capture and amplify lived experience through these projects has enabled us to develop tools, templates and techniques that can be used by us and shared with other advocacy organisations developing similar publications.

Thank you to Carmel and Liz, two students on social work placement from Deakin University and the Australian Catholic University, who worked with ACTCOSS to develop a lived experience toolkit (to be released soon).

Over the last 12 months, ACTCOSS has continued to draw on the lived experience publications we've developed over several years to enhance our policy work. We call on this material or share it at least two to three times every week.

Lived experience publications for your use

We've made most of our lived experience publications available on our website so you can use them for your policy and systemic advocacy work. Feel free to reference them in your own publications, research and media commentary. Find them at actcoss.org.au



[Stories of Home](#)
(housing & homelessness)



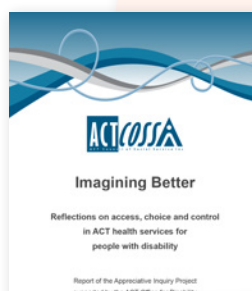
[Stories of Chance](#)
(gambling harm)



[Stories of Transition](#)
(impacts of service transitions including the NDIS)



[Food Assistance, Food Security and the Affordability of Healthy Food in Canberra](#)



[Imagining Better](#)
(disability & healthcare)

What We Heard
(lived experiences of people on Newstart & other allowances) – limited release.

STORIES OF CHANCE

In 2018, thanks to your membership fees, we published *Stories of Chance* – a report exploring the costs of gambling harm to the Canberra community and the resilience of people who experience harm and come back. This work was a partnership with the Canberra Gambling Reform Alliance, whose research informed the data presented in the report. The project was made possible by the short-term placement of two social work students – Carmel and Liz – in the ACTCOSS policy team.

In *Stories of Chance*, six individuals speak about their experiences of gambling, and we also hear from services who work with people to support their recovery from gambling harm. A financial counsellor and a club worker also speak about harm they witnessed.

As part of this project, we released a [factsheet on gambling harm](#) and the strength of the regulatory environment for electronic gaming machines in the ACT – which we found were amongst the most lax in Australia.

We sent *Stories of Chance* to people with the power to change the regulatory and operating environments that can reduce harm from gambling, including governments, regulators and the industry.

We continue to work with Canberra Gambling Reform Alliance and as a member of the ACT Gaming and Racing Commission Gambling Harm Reference Group to advocate for better regulation of gambling in the ACT.

A former club worker speaks out

Stories of Chance provided a perspective not often heard in the gambling harm debate – that of hospitality staff placed at the front line of gambling harm. Jack's account of his time in a Canberra club invited us to question the responsibility placed on workers who receive inconsistent support from management.

“When I first arrived in the ACT I worked in a local Canberra club and was unaware of the ‘club culture’ in the ACT and NSW. I remember the first time I saw someone feeding \$50 notes into a machine and was taken aback by the amounts certain patrons would feed through machines night after night.”

Shared statement

Progress & gaps

In 2016, ACTCOSS and another 19 organisations representative of the diverse ACT community endorsed a [Community Shared Statement of priorities for action for the 2016-20 ACT Government](#). As at 2018-19, we have seen progress and gaps as follows.

Social infrastructure

Progress

- Improved resourcing for some areas of disability support
- Development of a Carers Strategy
- Development of a Volunteer Strategy
- Development of second action plan for Multicultural Strategy and adoption of Welcoming Cities framework
- Renewal and updating of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement with the ACT Government (new agreement negotiated and launched in 2018)

Gaps

- Shared responsibility for investment in social infrastructure by community, government and private sector
- Addressing ongoing gaps in access and inclusion for people with disability and older people
- Multicultural leadership of policy design and investment
- Adequate funding for Carers Strategy and Volunteering Strategy implementation
- Program design and policy reform that would improve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander self-determination and increase relevance and effectiveness of services

Services

- Education system reform built around the goal of improving engagement and attainment for students not meeting education benchmarks (Future of Education and Inclusive Education Strategies)
- Reducing violence and responding better to people who experience trauma as a result of violence (Family Safety hub, restored funding to homelessness assistance services)
- Improved resourcing of legal assistance services

- Progress on child protection system improvements
- Focus on investing in business development in community services according to priorities agreed in the ACT Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-2026
- Consistently valued and adequately resourced community-school partnerships

Shared statement endorsers



ACTCOSS
 ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait
 Islander Elected Body
 ACT Shelter
 ACT Mental Health
 Consumer Network
 Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug
 Association ACT
 Carers ACT

Canberra Multicultural
 Community Forum
 Conservation Council of the ACT
 Council on the Ageing
 (COTA) ACT
 CREATE Foundation
 Families ACT
 Health Care Consumers
 Association of the ACT

Mental Health Community
 Coalition ACT
 P&C Council of the ACT
 People With Disabilities ACT
 Unions ACT
 Volunteering and Contact ACT
 Women's Centre for
 Health Matters
 Youth Coalition of the ACT

City infrastructure

- Affordable housing (ACT Govt Affordable Housing Strategy)
- Inclusion of social infrastructure in the urban renewal policy agenda (ACT Planning Strategy 2018)
- Improved investment in health (chronic illness, mental health) in 2018-19 ACT Budget

- Adequacy and effectiveness of responses to homelessness
- Improved transport affordability, access and utility for low income people and people who experience barriers to mobility
- Addressing gaps in health investment relevant to alcohol and other drug (AOD) needs, and for people living with disability

Economic development

- Secure Local Jobs Code in construction and cleaning industries
- Improved investment in programs to support a just transition to zero carbon emissions (Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme extended eligibility and expanded range of investments)

- Secure employment in community services through funding adequacy and security

Progress

Gaps

Wellbeing indicators

ACTCOSS had for a number of years been advocating for the ACT Government to articulate its social goals for the city, alongside its economic goals, and to build strong mechanisms for community co-production of goals and shared monitoring of progress.

In 2018, the ACT Government announced it would develop wellbeing indicators for the ACT and ACTCOSS has been involved in public and behind the scenes advocacy on what the indicators should include and how the community should be involved in governance of indicator development, monitoring and evaluation.

ACT Budget

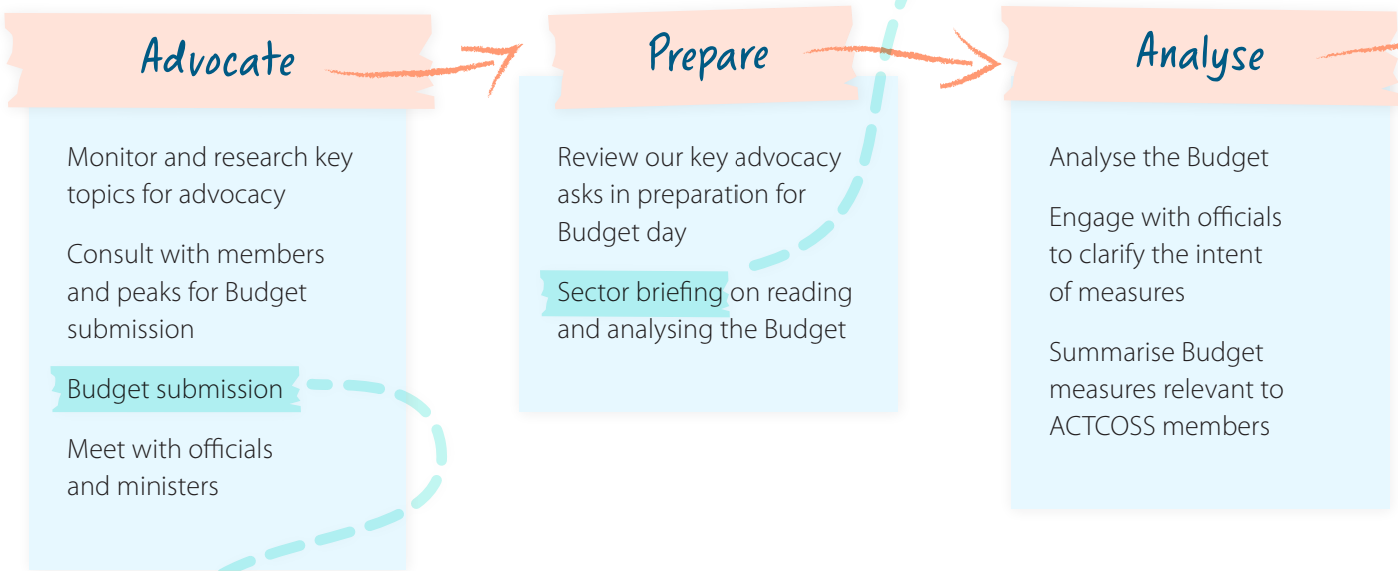
Our ACT Budget submission, snapshot, and community sector forum are key ways in which ACTCOSS draws upon and seeks to build all three forms of social capital: bonding capital with our members, bridging capital between community organisations and peak bodies, and linking capital with ACT Government ministers and officials.

Budget season year-round activities

Sponsored by HESTA, our ACT Community Sector Budget Forum is a highlight of the ACTCOSS year in which every member of the team has a role.

Our Budget season advocacy illustrates the diverse skills and activities we use all year round across our whole agenda:

Member opportunity
Come along to our briefing to learn how to read and analyse ACT Budget papers.
Thank you to Megan Smithies, who volunteers her time to lead this briefing.



Member opportunity
Around September-October, we invite input from all of our members to develop our submission on ACTCOSS Budget priorities.



Members & attendees being addressed by Chief Minister Barr at the ACT Community Sector Budget Forum 2019

We deeply value the support of HESTA that enables us to host the yearly ACT Community Sector Budget Forum with the Chief Minister and other ACT cabinet ministers.

Member opportunity

The day after the ACT Budget is released, we hold a meeting with ACTCOSS members to review our draft Budget snapshot and get further feedback about Budget initiatives.

Share

Commentate on the value of new investments and gaps in investment

Talk with members and peaks about their views on the Budget

Host the ACT Community Sector Budget Forum with the Chief Minister and other cabinet ministers

Member opportunity

Come along to our Budget forum two days after the release of the ACT Budget. You can engage directly with ACT Government ministers about Budget initiatives.

Reflect

Make a submission to the Legislative Assembly Budget Estimates hearings

Present as a witness at the Estimates hearing.

Member opportunity

By the end of Budget week, we seek members' input for our submission to the Select Committee on Estimates and for evidence we provide at their public hearings held later in June.

Then we start the process again.

Get involved with the ACT Budget

We always value hearing from members about ways to improve our ACT Budget work.

Please get in touch via actcoss@actcoss.org.au or phone 02 6202 7200 to share your feedback.

And keep an eye out on all our channels for member opportunities to get involved.

Enabling & celebrating sector leadership

Building new policy collaborations

ACTCOSS collaborates on policy every day – between our teams, with members, with ACT peak bodies and with our COSS colleagues. These collaborations are immensely valued. In the last year, we've begun intentionally bringing together minds and perspectives from very different and sometimes unlikely places to apply new eyes and seasoned policy experience to strengthen our advocacy. We have called these 'think tanks'.

Transport Think Tank: helped us produce a set of draft proposals and recommendations for our submission to the Moving Canberra Integrated Transport Strategy. This led to ACTCOSS formulating recommendations on 11 work areas for strategy development and implementation and 13 priorities to guide transport planning and integration into the future.

Housing Think Tank: helped shape our policy understanding and frame our dialogue with officials and ministers. Their insights contributed to briefings we produced for new ministers, correspondence and other submissions including our Budget submission asks related to transport and housing.

The Housing Think Tank helped to hone our approach to holding the ACT Government to account on the commitments made in the ACT Housing Strategy. Some positive feedback included that, "It's really good to have people coming together from different points of view and developing consensus" and that this was "a valuable way of working. Thanks for convening it."

ACTCOSS is looking at opportunities to host more think tanks and continue to strengthen our advocacy collaboration.

We are keen to hear from readers on topics that might benefit from different approaches to advocacy collaboration.

Transport Think Tank feedback

"Thanks for the focus on Transport - we definitely are in support of this endeavor"

"this is a great outcome and opportunity. Well done to you and ACTCOSS for continuing to support and champion transport issues/ options for all Canberrans"

"Thanks to ACTCOSS for working on this... happy to be involved as the changed network has affected several large retirement villages in the ACT"



CEO Susan Helyar presenting at Nous Group for Anti-Poverty Week 2018

Anti-Poverty Week

For Anti-Poverty Week 2018, ACTCOSS worked with the Australian Red Cross ACT to produce the film [Together Creating Pathways out of Poverty](#). These stories show that poverty is created by adverse circumstances, and lack of options, not individual failings or choices. The positive message of the films is that people's resourcefulness in difficult circumstances and the thoughtfulness of others create real and lasting pathways out of poverty.

Children's rights symposium

We held a symposium on 'The Rights of Children and Young People: Raised Expectations – Raised Responsibilities' on 16 November 2019. Almost 50 people attended.

ACTCOSS hosted this forum as one of our more regular events that replaced our biennial conference. These events are designed to provide a specific focus on an issue that is topical in the community sector. The events present a guest speaker who brings new insights and an external perspective to the ACT, as well as showcasing the knowledge of ACT-based thought leaders. We aim to challenge participants' current perspectives on issues, and to stimulate and inspire new knowledge as well as changes in practice.

In the wake of the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, a symposium on children's rights was both timely and critical.



Megan Mitchell
National Children's Commissioner

discussed her current Child Safe Organisations project & the Royal Commission



Julie Tong
CEO, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health & Community Services

discussed the importance of community control in services for Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander children, young people & families

Paris
Young Thinker in Residence,
ACT Human Rights Commission

talked about the value of young people having a voice & ways for adults to provide opportunities for them to contribute their perspectives



Annie
a young woman with Down Syndrome

presented about what it means to her to have a voice and contribute to the decisions that affect her day-to-day life

Chris Redmond
CEO, Woden Community Service

discussed his organisation's experiences & learnings when tailoring services for children & young people, & the need for service delivery & outcomes to reflect the rights of children & young people

Tilly & Tahlea
a panel of two young people from CREATE

chatted with facilitator Will Mollison (Families ACT) on the theme 'Children's expectations - Adults' responsibilities'. They took questions from the audience and emphasised the importance of adults genuinely listening to children and young people and following through with action



ACT Community Sector Awards 2018

On 16 November, we announced the recipients of the ACT Community Sector Awards for 2018. About 80 people attended the festivities.

The biennial awards are a great opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of the committed and enthusiastic people that grow

individual and community wellbeing. Their passion, expertise, dedication and transformative influence on the lives of people and the strength of communities often goes unnoticed.

Find out more about the awards recipients: actcoss.org.au/awards2018

Amplifying the Voice of Lived Experience Award



Karen Leary,
MHCC ACT
(Highly Commended)

Susan Pellegrino,
CREATE Foundation
(Award Recipient)

Robin Davidson & Cara
Matthews, Rebus Theatre
(Highly Commended)

Susan Pellegrino & Nicky Link, CREATE Foundation

– for the empowerment programs they run, through which they have built connections to key stakeholders in the out of home care sector; and connecting and supporting children and young people – undertaking both individual and systemic advocacy.

Excellence in Community Development Award

Lauren Bradley, Community Development Coordinator, Woden Community Service

– for her passion and commitment to building community capacity and to support people experiencing marginalisation as a member of the Public Housing Relocation initiative.

Lauren Bradley,
Woden Community
Service
(Award Recipient)



Sel Cooper,
A Gender Agenda
(Highly Commended)

Annie Harvey, Australian
Red Cross Birth Family
Advocacy Support Service
(Highly Commended)

Community Sector Banking Little Feet, Big Footprint Award

Better Renting

– for their impact on the housing debate in the ACT, including playing a key role in the ACT Government’s decision to reverse the introduction of commercial bond guarantees, and releasing two landmark reports leading to work on a Private Senator’s Bill to improve the energy efficiency of rental properties.



Chantelle Francisco,
Community Sector
Banking
(Award Sponsor)

Joel Dignam,
Better Renting
(Award Recipient)

Glenda Stevens,
Palliative Care ACT
(Highly Commended)

ACT Community Love Your Work Award



Catherine Flynn,
SHINE for Kids

SHINE for Kids

– for their largely volunteer-led program which helps families to nurture and maintain important relationships and links between prisoners and their children during the parent’s incarceration at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Gallagher Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace Award

Belconnen Community Service Little Bit Fit Project Team

– for the hard work and initiative shown by staff, to encourage and support each other, in promoting a healthy, active workplace.



Adam McEvoy & Nicole Warren, Belconnen
Community Service Little Bit Fit Project
(Award Recipient)

Mark Saunderson,
Gallagher
(Award Sponsor)



Gulanga Program

The Gulanga Program continued its engagement across community-managed services, providing a wide range of support to agencies and individuals, offering learning and development opportunities and engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who work or volunteer in the sector.

In September 2018, Lyn Peacock left the program and we were fortunate to fill the position with a former employee, Kim Peters. Julie Butler continued in her role and has now been working with the Gulanga Program for 12 years.

Resources and publications

ACT NAIDOC Week Calendar

The Gulanga team was pleased that services and the community accessed the 2018 NAIDOC Calendar online. This is an important resource for staff and services to participate and celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures. ACTCOSS staff members attended various events.

Journal

Since 2015, the ACTCOSS winter journal has focused on an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander theme. In 2019, the [journal](#) invited articles relating to 'Cultural competency: Working together with Aboriginal &/ or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities'. The articles shared a wide range of perspectives and practical ways to implement good practice.

The team has worked on a few new initiatives whilst maintaining its commitment to promoting good practice when working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. We do this by working across four themes: service engagement; resource development; seminars, workshops and events; and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Here are some highlights for the Gulanga Program in 2018-19.

Accessing resources

We encourage everyone to access resources that assist organisations to implement and embed good practice when working and engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly within the ACT and region. These resources are available for download on the ACTCOSS website actcoss.org.au/gulanga. We also distribute our resources at seminars and events.

The Good Practice Guides provide nine readily accessible and practical learning resources for workers, volunteers and governing body members on topics ranging from preferences in terminology when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to commissioning Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artworks. One popular resource for services working with children and their families is the *Gulanga Activity Book*.

It's great to see so many people accessing the ACT NAIDOC Week Calendar and our themed journals. The most downloaded Gulanga Good Practice Guide was *Preferences in Terminology when Referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples*.

Gulanga resource downloads in 2018-19

NAIDOC Week Calendar:
ACT & Region

179

Cultural Awareness Self-
Assessment Toolkit (CASAT)

236

Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander Cultural
Resource for Community
Sector Workers

82

Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander
Men's Resource

45

ACTCOSS Reconciliation
Calendar Poster

72

Perpetual Calendar for
Reconciliation & Health

42

Options for our Community,
Housing Accommodation
Respite & Support

23

Download all these here:
actcoss.org.au/gulanga

ACTCOSS journal,
issues 84 & 88

295

Gulanga Good
Practice Guides x 9

281



156

"We saw your 'Gulanga Activity Book' at a sector event. We have left copies in our children's waiting room. It is a great way to keep children occupied whilst waiting for their appointment."
— ACT children's and family service

Cultural Awareness on Ngunnawal Country

The Gulanga Program is committed to providing cultural awareness initiatives for the sector. In May 2019, Richie Allan of Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation facilitated the 'Cultural Awareness on Country Tour'. Thirty participants boarded a bus and Richie gave them some hands-on experience and valuable local understanding and appreciation of the Ngunnawal land on which we all live and work. This new training venture was very popular and will be offered again in the near future.



Jason Allan & Richie Allan from Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation – Cultural Awareness On Country Tour

Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander workforce

Gulanga Program staff continued offering support and working in collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff working in the ACT community sector. This included providing mentoring and cultural supervision, partnering to host events and coordinating the 2018 ACT NAIDOC Community Sector Worker of the Year Award. For the first time, the award was presented to a team of workers – the Dhunlung Yarra Team at Relationships Australia Canberra and Region. The 2019 recipient was Albert Barker of the Worldview Program.

Self-care session

In May 2019, we invited Grant Sarra to provide a session for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community sector workers on self-care. The session provided a safe space for workers to focus on their wellbeing in the workplace and any responsibilities and challenges they may face outside the workplace. Grant is a fantastic mentor and gave the workers important tools they could use back in their workplaces.

ATSIComSec Network

Participation at ATSIComSec Network meetings has increased this year. The meetings are generally held at ACTCOSS or can be hosted by staff at workplaces. The ATSIComSec email network membership fluctuates between 50 and 60 members.



Dhunlung Yarra receiving NAIDOC award. From left: Glynnis Church, Cheryl Renouf, Priscilla Kennedy, & Camilla Rowland (Chair, ACTCOSS).
[Stanley 'Budda' Connors of Dhunlung Yarra not pictured]

Workforce support survey

As part of our continuous quality improvement program, the Gulanga team surveyed Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community sector workers to find out how to improve the relevance and effectiveness of workforce support.

Survey responses indicated that we should continue to provide professional mentoring and cultural supervision, affordable professional development opportunities and information sharing via the ATSIComSec email network. Feedback in the survey on the need for more health and wellbeing programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and improved cultural competence of employers will guide investment of Gulanga Program resources in 2019-20.

11 Years after 'The Apology'

In 2019, staff worked with the Dhunlung Yarra team from Relationships Australia Canberra and Region to present to the broader community 'Stories from the Children of the Stolen Generations'. The forum provided insights on the effects of intergenerational trauma experienced by the children whose parents and families were struggling to heal from being removed as a child. This was held in the theatre at Tuggeranong Community Arts Centre to accommodate an estimated 90 attendees. Feedback from attendees included many thanks for the opportunity to be part of a profoundly moving and rich learning experience.



'Stories from the Children of the Stolen Generations' forum



Silk scarves made at our day at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm

Strengthening our partnerships

Staff have worked together with agencies and groups on various projects over the years. To strengthen and maintain these relationships, we organised a joint event at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, west of Tharwa. The day included a Welcome to Country, a tour of the facility, silk scarf designing and candle making. All staff appreciated time to reconnect and re-energise for future challenges.

Participants valued the opportunity to work together on activities and meet each other. All agreed that the rural setting of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm provided a calm, picturesque and restorative environment for the day.

Business as usual

2019 Reconciliation Resource Draw in June every year

– encouraging organisations to reflect on their role in overcoming the causes of division and inequality between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians. Entries have a chance to win a basket of resources.

Participating in consultations, external meetings and networking events

– to hear about challenges facing workers and organisations in providing culturally competent services relevant to the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and to increase visibility of and access to Gulanga programs and resources.

Find out more about how the Gulanga Program can assist your organisation & workers

Our friendly Gulanga staff are happy to chat. Please give us a call on 02 6202 7200, email gulanga@actcoss.org.au or visit actcoss.org.au/gulanga

Growing the sector's capability

Growing the capability of the ACT community sector has been a core function of ACTCOSS for many years. Alongside our policy advocacy, it is part of discerning and advocating a social change agenda for the ACT community.

The capability team continuously grows its knowledge and refines its programs so that our service offer is relevant to the current local context and challenges facing workers and organisations. We also keep up to date with new research and identified good practice from the community sector and other sectors both locally and internationally. We do this through ongoing analysis of existing data and targeted research.

Evaluation and continuous improvement activities are embedded within our:

- Resources that document good practice
- Workshops that build skills and confidence – we had 231 people from 81 organisations participate across the thematic areas of governance and leadership, workforce planning and community development
- Forums that facilitate the transfer of good practice.
- Peer networks that share expertise and develop relationships in the sector – if you attended one of these meetings you were one of 287 from 181 different organisations! See [page 14](#) for more about our networks and how you can join
- Tailored support that supports the implementation of good practice

On tailored support

“It was very valuable/helpful to do the [time management] training internally as we all understand how it works in our team and could use examples together that we are all familiar with. It helped keep the content very specific and relevant.”

— Toora Women Inc.



[Sector Orientation Resource](#) – provides new and existing board members of community organisations with key information to stay well informed about governance and the ACT community sector context.

Capability assistance for your org

There are all sorts of ways our capability program can assist you and your organisation. Give us a call, email or drop by to:

- learn more about a peer network that may be useful to you or your colleagues
- check out our evolving body of resources or get help finding something specific
- discuss some tailored support – we can do facilitated training, or talk and think through specific issues with you
- or something else!

We are flexible in our offerings. If it turns out we can't assist, we will likely be able to point you in the right direction. Please contact us on 02 6202 7200 or email actcoss@actcoss.org.au.

Core Capacity Assessment Tool

Building and harnessing organisational capacity

Like government and business, not-for-profit community organisations shape communities and provide services. What sets community organisations apart is their priority of developing social capital and leading social change. But how do we make sure our organisations are growing the right kind of capacity to effectively contribute to social change?

As a starting point, not-for-profits need an accurate and comprehensive assessment of their strengths and challenges in order to know how to build capacity within their organisations.

In 2018-19, ACTCOSS continued to work on the development of a new capability offering – the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT).

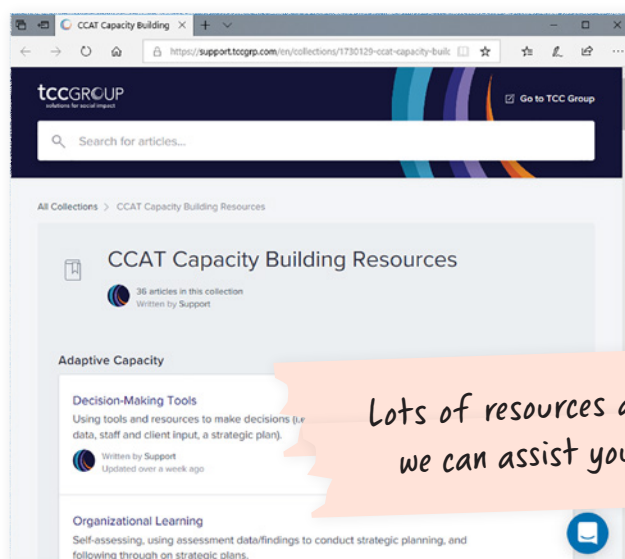
TCC Group's CCAT is a unique online tool developed and used for ten years in the USA that measures not-for-profit effectiveness in relation to four core capacities crucial for leading social change – adaptive, leadership, management, and technical – as well as organisational culture. The CCAT has been used by over 7,000 not-for-profits to build capacity, strengthen operations, and deliver on their missions.

Purchasing a CCAT assessment entitles organisations to access tools, resources and benchmarking services that have evolved over ten years of research and practice.

ACTCOSS is the only organisation licenced in Australia by TCC Group to make this tool available to Australian organisations. We have invested in this partnership so we can offer a unique service in the Australian capability development market. We value the insights gained in offering this service because it expands our knowledge of how to support organisations to focus their capacity building work to make the most difference. These insights also inform our advocacy regarding changes needed in the policy and regulatory settings that shape the operating environment for not-for-profit organisations.

Find out how the Core Capacity Assessment Tool can assist you

We encourage both members and other organisations to get in touch if you would like to know more about the CCAT service. Please contact our Capability Manager on samantha.quimby@actcoss.org.au or 02 6202 7200.



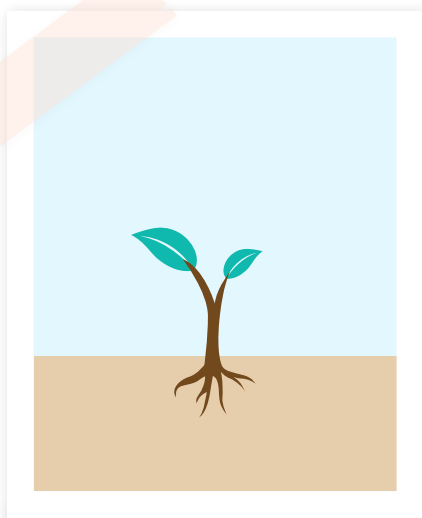
Lots of resources at the CCAT website we can assist you to work through

Community Assistance Support Program

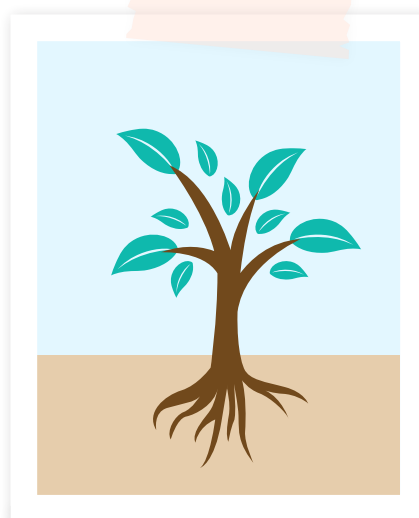
The ACT Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP), provides community care supports for people under 65 years with a health condition and their carers. It aims to maintain or enhance their health, wellbeing and independence, and enable participation and connections with community.

ACTCOSS is funded to assist and support CASP providers through facilitating networks, capability development and systemic advocacy.

Below you can see how we work together with CASP providers and decision makers to meet community need.



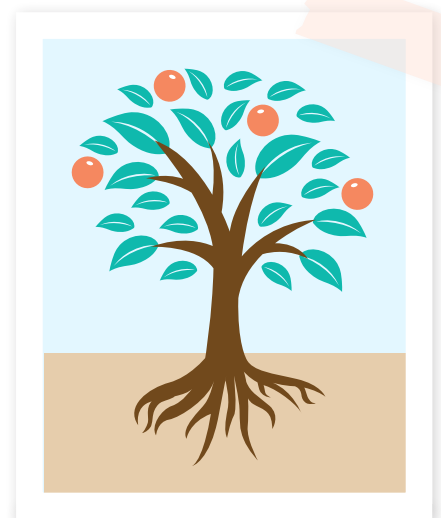
ACTCOSS's ongoing network and stakeholder engagement maintains and strengthens trusted relationships with non-government CASP service providers.



Through ongoing engagement and trusted relationships, we receive quality feedback on what supports are provided through CASP, who is using it and what goals are important.

This quality feedback enables us to provide a reliable system analysis on:

- The growing picture of the CASP service system
- CASP's relationship in the human service system
- Gaps and issues in CASP and other human service systems
- How to improve the service model to meet community need.



A reliable system analysis builds the evidence base to inform decision makers.

Well-informed decision makers strengthen future system change and reform that better provides supports for people in the community.

Tree With Roots Vectors
by Vecteezy.com

Sharing placemaking

Building bridges between specialists

Over the past four years, ACTCOSS and the Community Development Network of the ACT (CDNet) have partnered to provide the ACT Community Development Peer Network to offer opportunities for community development practitioners to connect, share and learn together.

During 2018-19, the network focused on placemaking – a space traditionally occupied by town planners and developers. Planners and community development practitioners are both interested in building communities. Planners start with the physical infrastructure; community development practitioners start with the people.

From this common goal, the network forged new language, wider connections and deeper

understandings as community development workers engaged with the world of city planning and were well received.

The learnings and interests of the network culminated in an event in May 2019, hosted by CDNet. People from the community, practitioners, senior managers in not-for-profits and government representatives heard stories of community development practice shaping places and the experiences people have in these places. Participants were also able to workshop their own ideas for what is important about building communities.

This theme will continue into 2019-20 and new members to the network gatherings are always welcome!



CEO Susan Helyar facilitating the May 2019 forum on 'The Art of Place: Growing Communities through Placemaking'

Interested in community development?

Join the Community Development Peer Network! Contact us on 02 6202 7200 or email actcoss@actcoss.org.au.

Reconciliation

Towards a new Reconciliation Action Plan

In 2019, ACTCOSS started on a journey of developing a new Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). As we reached the end of our existing Innovation RAP in 2018, we have spent time as a staff group reflecting on our goals, progress and learnings.

In 2019, the staff and Board are working towards the development of a Stretch RAP, which will have a longer-term focus and seek to embed reconciliation initiatives into our business strategies – both as an employer and a peak body.

NAIDOC Week community celebration event 2018: Because of Her, We Can

For the 4th year running, ACTCOSS partnered with sector colleagues to organise a free day of fun for our Canberra community to celebrate NAIDOC Week. The 2018 theme was 'Because of Her, We Can', and it was an opportunity to pay tribute to the invaluable contributions that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women have made – and continue to make – to our community.

We had live music performances, displays, and children's art and craft workshops!



Children's artwork from 2018 NAIDOC Week community celebration

Thanks!

This event was supported by Karralika (lead organiser), Community Services #1, Directions, Marymead, Australian Red Cross, Wellways, Woden Community Service, YWCA Canberra, The Smith Family and ACTCOSS.



Wiradjuri Echoes performing at the 2018 NAIDOC Week community celebration

Sharing our learnings about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures

ACTCOSS staff members take time at each staff meeting to share our appreciation and engagement with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander history, heritage and cultures.

Footprints at Mungo National Park

Craig Wallace shared a picture from Mungo National Park, which depicts a preserved footprint from approximately 20,000 years ago. The photo also shows the imprint from a walking aid and Craig explained how the track and position of this print indicates that a person with a disability was both included and participating in society at this time.

Ceramic bowl by Aunty Loretta



Eliza Moloney bought a ceramic bowl made by Aunty Loretta, who was born at Yass Mission. She had completed a Certificate IV in pottery in her 50s and now melds her Ngunnawal culture with her love of art. Her art is inspired by her childhood when she spent time at the Yass River with her father, listening to his stories.

Yarrudhamarra Creations



Kim Peters told us about Yarrudhamarra Creations run by Kristie Peters, where she creates beautiful art, craft and designs, and offers hands-on activities for people to learn about Aboriginal art and culture: follow on Facebook or Instagram: @yarrudhamarracreations

Laurie 'Big Boss' Baymarrwangga

Geoff Buchanan shared about Laurie 'Big Boss' Baymarrwangga's work sustaining local language and knowledge for authentic livelihoods on the homelands, and the project to complete the [Illustrated Handbook of Yolngu Sign Language of North East Arnhem Land](#).

Find out more & support the creation of the book here: <https://bit.ly/2JwJx3Q>



2019 AIATSIS International Women's Day poster featuring Laurie Baymarrwangga. Artwork by Gill Warden, 2013

ICT renewal

In 2018-19, ACTCOSS started on an exciting journey of ICT renewal. Our old hardware and systems were getting in the way of our work. To improve our efficiency and capacity, we made some significant investments in new technology.

This year we:

- Switched to Xero online accounting software. It has automated many accounting and compliance functions that used to take up a lot of time
- Moved our files and email to the cloud with Microsoft Office 365 and decommissioned our (very old) server. We can now access our work documents and emails from anywhere at any time
- Bought some new desktops and laptops with docks to replace our (very slow) desktops
- Introduced Microsoft Teams to share and collaborate on documents and projects.

These changes – while challenging at first – have helped streamline our cross-team communication, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation. We are also strengthening our engagement with members and streamlining connections with suppliers and employees.

This journey will continue into 2019 and 2020 through the implementation of office-based wifi, an upgrade to our phone system and the development of a CRM (a.k.a. a fancy contact database).

Thank you to our Board who has supported substantial investment of reserves and operating capital in ICT renewal. Thank you also to funders who recognise the need to invest – not only in the front-line work of community organisations – but also the back-office infrastructure that enables us to work better.



Our ICT Officer and the 'tower of terror' – all the old, slow machines, wiped & ready for e-waste.

Having fun with our new toys

One of the great things we've started in our new Microsoft Teams platform is FunCOSS – a channel where staff can share interesting facts, funny stories, invitations to events... and even requests for help with fancy dress costumes! We also love a good funny GIF.

Considering an ICT refresh?

We're happy to share our learnings from our own ICT refresh with members. We can't provide technical support, but we might be able to share some tips about the process. Contact us on 02 6202 7200 or email actcoss@actcoss.org.au.

Our Board

The ACTCOSS Board provides financial and legal oversight and the strategic direction for the organisation. Its members are elected from ACTCOSS members at the AGM in November each year.

Thank you to our Board for guiding us through an exciting 2018-19.

Executive Committee	Attended	Apologies
Glenda Stevens, Associate Member President (elected Nov 2018) Secretary (elected Nov 2017)	6/6	0
Camilla Rowland, Marymead President (re-elected Nov 2017, resigned Nov 2018)	3/3	0
Martin Fisk, Menslink Vice President (re-elected Nov 2018)	5/6	1
Bruce Papps, Northside Community Service Treasurer (elected Nov 2018)	3/4	1
Lee-Ann Akauola, Relationships Australia Canberra & Region Treasurer (term ended Nov 2018)	3/3	0
Beth Slatyer, Associate Member Secretary (elected Nov 2018) Ordinary Member (elected Nov 2016)	5/6	1
Ordinary Members	Attended	Apologies
Alicia Flack-Kone, ACT Down Syndrome Association (re-elected Nov 2018)	6/6	0
Lee Maiden, Communities@Work (elected Nov 2018)	4/4	0
Andrew Scotford, CIT Student Association (elected Nov 2018)	4/4	0
Anthony Egeland, Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT (elected Nov 2018)	3/4	1
Dalane Drexler, ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (re-elected 2017)	3/6	3
Karen McKernan, Mental Health Foundation ACT (elected Nov 2017)	6/6	0
Lynnice Church, Australian Red Cross ACT (elected Nov 2017)	1/6	3
Petrea Messent, Dementia Australia (elected Nov 2017)	4/6	2
Peter Dwyer, Religious Society of Friends Canberra (term ended Nov 2018)	3/3	0
Roger Munson, ADACAS (term ended Nov 2018)	2/3	1

How do you get on the ACTCOSS Board?

Step 1: Make sure you're a current ACTCOSS member – an Associate Member or one of the two nominated delegates of a Member Organisation.

Step 2: Keep an eye out for our call for Board nominations prior to the November AGM.

Step 3: Complete the nomination form and send it to us by the closing date.

Step 4: Await the Board elections at the AGM!

Did you know...

In mid-2019 we finalised a review of our Constitution. Some of the changes included updating the language we use. From now:

Committee => Board

President => Chair

Vice President => Vice Chair

Director => CEO

Board Member => Director

Members

Thank you to all our members for 2018-19. You are vital to our work.

While we offer a variety of membership benefits, members offer us benefits too! We rely on you for your expertise, your support and your financial contributions.

Member Organisations

A Gender Agenda	Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD)	Diversity ACT Community Services
ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations	Canberra Community Law	Domestic Violence Crisis Service
ACT Disability, Aged & Carer Advocacy Service Inc.	Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association	Doris Women's Refuge Inc.
ACT Down Syndrome Association Inc.	Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc.	DUO - Life Without Barriers
ACT ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Society	Canberra Police Community Youth Club (PCYC)	Environmental Collective Housing Organisation Inc.
ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc.	Canberra Potters	Epilepsy Association ACT (Inc.)
ACT Playgroups Association Inc.	Canberra Rape Crisis Centre	EveryMan Australia Inc.
ACT Shelter	Canberra Refugee Support Incorporated	Families & Friends for Drug Law Reform (ACT) Inc.
Advocacy for Inclusion	Canberra Youth Residential Services	Families ACT Inc.
AIDS Action Council	The Cancer Council ACT	Family Drug Support
Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT Inc.	Capital Health Network	The Food Cooperative Shop
Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT	Care Inc.	GROW - ACT
ANU Student Association	Carers ACT Inc.	Havelock Housing Association Inc.
Argyle Community Housing	CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn	Health Care Consumers' Association
Asthma Foundation ACT	CHC Affordable Housing	Hepatitis ACT Inc.
Australian Association of Social Workers ACT Branch	Communities@Work	Isaac's Band of Brothers & Sisters Inc.
Australian Red Cross - ACT/SE NSW	Community and Public Sector Union	Justice Action
Barnardos Australia	Community Connections	Karinya House Home for Mothers & Babies Inc.
Belconnen Community Service	Community Medics Australia Limited	Karralika Programs Inc.
The Benevolent Society	Community Radio 2XX Inc.	Koomarri
Beryl Women Inc.	Community Services #1	L'Arche Geneseret
Better Renting	Companion House	Lone Fathers
Canberra & Queanbeyan ADD Support Group Inc.	Conflict Resolution Service Inc.	Majura Women's Group
Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy	Deaf Society	Marymead
	Dementia Australia	Mengineering
	Directions Health Services	Menslink Inc.
		Mental Health Community Coalition ACT

Mental Health Foundation
 Mental Illness Education ACT
 The Mill House
 Nexus Human Services
 Northside Community Service Ltd
 Pain Support ACT Inc.
 Palliative Care ACT
 Parentline ACT Inc.
 Pegasus Riding for the Disabled Inc.
 People with Disabilities ACT Inc.
 Post and Ante Natal Depression Support & Info. Inc.
 Prisoners Aid (ACT) Inc.
 Rebus Theatre
 Red Nose
 Relationships Australia Canberra and Region Inc.
 Religious Society of Friends Canberra Inc.
 RSI & Overuse Injury Association of the ACT, Inc.
 SDN Children's Services
 SEE-Change Inc.
 Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT Inc.
 Sharing Places Inc.
 The Smith Family
 Softlaw Community Projects Limited
 St John's Care
 St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
 Technical Aid to the Disabled (ACT) Inc. (TADACT)
 Ted Noffs Foundation
 Tenants' Union ACT
 TJILLARI Justice Aboriginal Corporation
 Toora Women Inc.
 Tuggeranong Link Community Houses and Centres Inc.
 UCA Canberra Region Presbytery (UnitingCare Kippax)
 UnionsACT
 Uniting
 Volunteering and Contact ACT

Warehouse Circus Inc.
 Wellways Australia
 Woden Community Service Inc.
 Women With Disabilities ACT
 Women's Centre for Health Matters Inc.
 Women's Electoral Lobby (Australia), Inc.
 Women's Legal Centre (ACT Region) Inc.
 Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation
 YMCA of Canberra
 Youth Coalition of the ACT
 YWCA Canberra

Affiliate Members

Legal Aid ACT
 Victim Support
 Wellcare Australia

Associate Members

C Aitchison	J Kitchin
C Ansted	D Lucas
M Baldwin	K Lyttle
V Begonja	J McGee
J Carty	A McLaughlin
L Church	C Moore
K Cox	L O'Brien
J Craig	B Orr
J Crawford	W Prowse
M Douglas	R Refshauge
K Duck	S Reiffer
P Dwyer	C Sefian
J Esdaile	B Slatyer
A Gupta	L Stephens
S Hanfling	G Stevens
M Hansen	H Swift
L Harris	R Vassarotti
P Humphries	E Wensing
R Ibarra	M Whyte
P Kendall	

Member numbers for 2018-19

Organisations **123**

(6 new)

3 Affiliates

(1 new)

Associates **39**

(5 new)

Not an ACTCOSS member yet?

Support ACTCOSS and help make Canberra a just, safe and sustainable community. Find out more: actcoss.org.au/member-benefits or call us on 02 6202 7200.

Member expertise

Our members are experts in their fields and share with us their knowledge when we seek advice on policy, reconciliation, capability development, and the community.

We appreciate the time and energy they spend with us as we work together to achieve social justice.

Members who have elected to be published in our annual report are listed here. You can change your preferences by contacting us.

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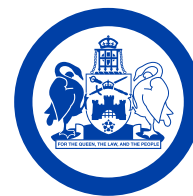
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