



Annual Report

2022-23

actcoss@actcoss.org.au

actcoss.org.au

02 6202 7200

ABN 81 818 839 988

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

ACTCOSS acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We pay respects to their elders, past and present. ACTCOSS celebrates the historic and ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the sector and society.

Funders and Partners

ACTCOSS received funding from:

Initiative of



Partners



Table of Contents

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians	2
Funders and Partners	2
Table of Contents	3
About ACTCOSS	4
Chair’s Report – Jeremy Halcrow	5
CEO’s Report – Dr Devin Bowles	6
2022-23 Annual Report Snapshot	7
Meet the Team	8
Financial Statements	9
ACTCOSS Strategic Plan	10
2022-23 Highlights	12
Objective One: Improved income, wellbeing, equity, and inclusion outcomes for people in the ACT and region who are marginalised.	18
Objective Two: A sustainable and empowered ACT community sector	20
Objective Three: A well-governed, representative and effective ACTCOSS	24
Gulanga Program	26
ACTCOSS Board	28
Organisation Members	29
Associate Members	31

About ACTCOSS

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) is a non-profit organisation advocating for social justice in the ACT and representing not-for-profit organisations. We also work closely with colleagues in the nationwide Councils of Social Service (COSS) network and the national body, Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

Our Vision

ACTCOSS's vision is for an inclusive ACT and region where no one lives in poverty. We work to make Canberra a just, safe, and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

Our Purpose

ACTCOSS works to influence Government policies to end poverty, discrimination, and exclusion within the ACT through a trusted, collective and inclusive voice.

Our purpose is also to support the community sector, helping to ensure it has adequate resources and capacity.

We walk alongside Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community organisations, communities, and individuals to support the achievement of sovereignty, justice, and self-determination.

Strategic Objectives

- **Objective one:** Improved income, wellbeing, equity, and inclusion outcomes for people in the ACT region who are marginalised.
- **Objective two:** A sustainable and empowered ACT community sector
- **Objective three:** A well-governed, representative, and effective ACTCOSS

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: <https://actcoss.org.au/>

Chair's Report – Jeremy Halcrow



This year has been marked by both continuity and change.

In December we farewelled Dr Emma Campbell as our CEO after three years of passionate advocacy for the most vulnerable in our community. My deep appreciation also goes to Dr Gemma Killen for accepting to act as CEO as we recruited Emma's replacement. She did so with great wisdom, diligence, and skill.

The Board were encouraged by the high calibre of applicants seeking to follow Emma. We are excited to have recruited Dr Devin Bowles as our new CEO, who has experience in leading effective policy advocacy in the ACT. We believe he has the skills to lead ACTCOSS into a new chapter in its history.

What never changes is ACTCOSS' core purpose: to be a voice for social justice in Canberra. Our vision for "an inclusive ACT and region where no one lives in poverty" forms the foundation for our new strategic plan. I thank all our staff and members who contributed feedback to the ACTCOSS Strategic Plan 2023-2025. In line with our new tagline, "Working for Social Justice", this plan outlines the key objectives that will shape our direction over the next three years.

The ACTCOSS Board are committed to making tangible steps as we walk alongside our First Nations community. We have begun implementing a new Reconciliation Action Plan, covering the November 2022 to November 2024 period (this was presented to members at the last AGM). As part of this commitment, ACTCOSS is now offering free membership to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

The Gulanga program continued to support member organisations to improve cultural awareness through training, online resources, and consultation services. A further focus is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers, and ACTCOSS is proud to offer networking peer support, media training and tickets to NAIDOC events to our ATSIComSec network members.

ACTCOSS' focus on advocacy underpinned by quality research continued with a focus this year on a just energy transition (two key research reports) and the ever-increasing cost of living through the ['2023 ACT Cost of Living Report'](#).

After 18 months of hard work by the ACTCOSS staff team, I was honoured to help launch the ACT Community Sector Careers Gateway in February 2023, together with Minister Stephens-Smith and Minister Steele. Thank you to all the members and supporters who attended, and in particular those who are supporting the project through the Steering Committee or as Career Ambassadors. Given the workforce challenges across our sector, this is a critical initiative outlined in more detail later in this report.

Finally, I want to thank all our directors for their generous contributions to the effective governing of ACTCOSS throughout the year. I especially I want to acknowledge Cathi Moore and Alicia Flack-Kone, who finish their terms on the Board this year after many years of service to ACTCOSS. Thanks also to my Vice-Chair Lisa Kelly and Treasurer Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez for their ongoing support and hard work in sharing leadership responsibilities through this year of change.

CEO's Report – Dr Devin Bowles



I had the privilege of being appointed as the ACTCOSS CEO in late May 2023. The last several years have seen substantial change both at ACTCOSS and for the people and organisations we represent. The year ahead will be the same.

Ahead of the 2024 ACT Legislative Assembly election, ACTCOSS will lead the community sector to influence the election platforms of the major parties. ACTCOSS and the other peaks have an opportunity to help the sector develop agreed messages that will maximise their impact. Based on the sentiments of the sector and desperate need on the ground, housing and homelessness will be the key focus among a range of priorities.

As the ACT Government shifts to a commissioning model for procurement, the repercussions for the community sector and the people we serve are substantial. While commissioning can lead to services that are better tailored to community needs, it requires substantial resources and expertise. A reform this extensive is bound to lead to unintended consequences. The measure of collective success will be how rapidly we fix errors and learn from mistakes. ACTCOSS is uniquely positioned to see the whole-of-system implications of commissioning, and to advocate for better processes. I am proud of the outcomes our advocacy has achieved for the people who use community services and to improve the commissioning process. Over the coming year, a major priority for ACTCOSS will be to continue to work closely with the ACT Government and the community sector to maximise the benefits and minimize the costs and risks associated with commissioning.

While ACTCOSS plays an important leadership role in setting the strategic direction for the community sector in the ACT, our position is nuanced when it comes to walking alongside First Nations community organisations and communities. In this sphere, ACTCOSS needs to take its direction from First Nations communities in the ACT. Over the next year, ACTCOSS will aim to further deepen its ties with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and learn more about the role they would like ACTCOSS to play. Where appropriate, ACTCOSS will elevate their voices where required. Following the Referendum, it is important that the ACT find meaningful mechanisms to increase self-determination. An expanded, more comprehensively funded ACCO sector in the ACT is a clear step in this direction.

I thank the ACTCOSS Board members for their warm encouragement and expert and thoughtful advice in my first months on the job. I am very fortunate to work with you. Deep thanks are also due to my staff colleagues. I could not ask for a group more passionately committed to social justice than you are, and I appreciate your continued work to orient me to ACTCOSS and the breadth of our work and mission. ACTCOSS's members have also been generous with their time and expertise in orienting me to the role.

2022-23 Annual Report Snapshot



ACTCOSS launched the Community Sector Careers Gateway. (page 12)



Member satisfaction remains high with 93% of members stating that ACTCOSS advocates for positive social justice and change well.



ACTCOSS released 3 major reports during 2022-2023 - the ACT Cost-of-Living report and 2 energy-related reports. (pages 14 & 15)



ACTCOSS launched a new brand and website. (page 23)



ACTCOSS launched a new Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2022-2024.



ACTCOSS attended over 10 hearings as a result of advocacy submissions.



ACTCOSS facilitated three sector consultations for the 2023-24 ACT Budget and held a post-Budget Forum with 36 participants. (page 18)



ACTCOSS maintained strong representation of members from across different sectors, with 172 members at the end of the year.



ACTCOSS held over 20 training and information sessions throughout 2022-23, attended by over 400 people (page 23 & 26)



Government released its response to the ACTCOSS 'Counting the Costs' report agreeing in principle to five recommendations, and in full to one recommendation out of a total of six recommendations.

Meet the Team

CEO



Devin Bowles
(from May 2023)

CEO



Emma Cambell
(to Jan 2023)

Head of Operations



Stephanie Crosby

Admin Support



Tashi Choden

Comms + Events



Patrick Johnson
(to June 2023)

Head of Policy



Gemma Killen

Senior Policy Adviser



Lyndsay Basset

Policy Support



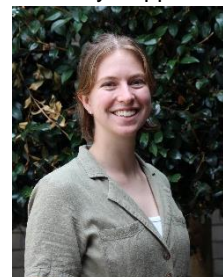
Gabby Robertson

Policy Support



Avan Daruwalla

Policy Support



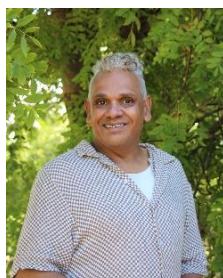
Claire Bailey
(Jan-April 2023)

Gulanga Program
Manager



Rachel Kelly-Church

Gulanga Support



Brendan Richards
(to June 2023)

Head of Sector
Development



Heather Fitt

Sector Development
Officer



Emma Hawke

Sector Development
Officer



Luise Zolio

Senior Project Officer

Amber Bootle
(to March 2023)

"...the ACTCOSS team is doing great work across so many areas to strengthen the community sector and advocate for social change...Love your work!"— ACTCOSS member.

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023		
	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Government and other grant funding	1,677,126	1,385,320
Other income	111,812	138,756
COVID-19 assistance	-	5,136
Finance income	5,763	1,860
Total revenue	1,794,702	1,531,072
Employee expenses	(1,239,120)	(1,170,014)
Depreciation and amortisation	(59,934)	(48,960)
External labour & consulting	(167,093)	(174,730)
Other expenses	(257,959)	(103,311)
Finance expenses	(4,611)	(4,678)
Surplus from operations	65,985	29,288
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	65,985	29,288

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023			
	Retained earnings	General reserve	Total
	\$	\$	\$
2023			
Balance at 1 July 2022	254,115	549,056	803,171
Surplus for the year	65,985	-	65,985
Transfer to reserves	(132,570)	132,570	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	187,530	681,626	869,156

Find the full financial statements for 2022-23 on the ACTCOSS website:

<https://actcoss.org.au/publication/financial-statements-for-the-year-ended-30-june-2023/>

ACTCOSS Strategic Plan

In November 2022, ACTCOSS was proud to launch its Strategic Plan for the next 3 years following a period of consultation and workshops with members and the ACTCOSS Board.

Thank you to all who contributed and thank you to Mia Swainson for facilitating this work for us. We look forward to using this document to guide our work, our decision making and our priorities in the coming years.

The Strategic Plan - <https://actcoss.org.au/publication/actcoss-strategic-plan-2023-2025/>

1 Strategic vision



An inclusive ACT and region where no one lives in poverty.

2 Our values



- All people are treated with dignity and respect,
- The full realisation of human rights,
- Diversity and inclusion,
- Self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,
- Inclusion of people experiencing disadvantage,
- A just and sustainable future for all.

3 Our purpose



- To influence Government policies to end poverty, discrimination and exclusion in the ACT,
- To create a trusted collective and inclusive voice, advocating for positive social and system change,
- To support and work with the community sector and ensure it has adequate resources and capacity,
- To walk alongside Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community organisations, communities and individuals to work towards the achievement of sovereignty, justice and self-determination for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4 Strategic Objectives



Objective one: Improved income, wellbeing, equity and inclusion outcomes for people in the ACT and region who are marginalised

- Prioritisation of equity by ACT government in service delivery and policy implementation,
- Improved housing outcomes,
- Fairer social security and financial assistance systems,
- A just transition to net zero emissions that reduces inequality and disadvantage and leaves no-one behind.

4 Strategic Objectives



Objective two: A sustainable and empowered ACT community sector

- Funding that allows ACT community sector organisations to meet diverse community needs,
- Supporting innovation to grow and maintain a high-quality community sector workforce and investment to provide decent wages and conditions for workers,
- Increased cultural competency among all ACT community sector organisations,
- Improved and expanded community facilities.

4 Strategic Objectives



Objective three: A well-governed, representative and effective ACTCOSS

- Strong recognition and leadership across ACT community on social justice issues,
- Values aligned with members,
- Relationships based on trust, transparency and collaboration,
- Clear and effective governance and operational systems,
- Active participation with, and influence in, the COSS network.

2022-23 Highlights

During the 2022-23 period ACTCOSS has achieved many things that our members and stakeholders can celebrate. These achievements showcase the hard work and dedication from our staff and our passion for the positive outcomes that advocacy and campaigns by ACTCOSS and its community sector members help to achieve.

ACT Community Sector Careers Gateway



Minister Stephen-Smith at the launch event

In February 2023, after a great deal of hard work, ACTCOSS was pleased to publicly launch the ACT Community Sector Careers Gateway.

Enabled through a two-year grant from the National Careers Institute, the Careers Gateway aims to create awareness of the benefits, opportunities, and rewards of a career in the community sector.

The ACT Community Sector Careers Gateway helps support individuals to find 'a career that matches your values' and provides various free resources through the website on the benefits of working in the sector, transferable skills and creating a good application.

The main audience for this program are:

- Students (high school, VET and University)
- People looking for a career change; and
- Retention of workers already in the sector

Interested in becoming a
Career Ambassador ??
Call us 6202 7231

The program is supported by career ambassadors, experienced individuals who work in the community sector volunteering their time to share their knowledge and experience with others. There are currently over 40 career ambassadors supporting the Gateway.

Since its launch, ACTCOSS staff and Career Ambassadors for the Careers Gateway have attended a mixture of High Schools, Universities and CareerXpo events: reaching over 10,000 young people in Canberra and surrounding regions.



ANU Law Fair - Career Expo



Careers Gateway Launch

To find out more information go to [ACT Community Sector Careers Gateway](https://www.communitysector.org.au) or <https://www.communitysector.org.au>

Anti-Poverty Week (16-22 October)

In October 2022, the 20th annual Anti-Poverty Week (APW) was held across Australia, calling upon governments and parliamentarians to commit to halving child poverty by 2030. ACTCOSS launched ACT Anti-Poverty Week 2022 with a media conference featuring CEOs from across the Canberra community sector, highlighting that while ACT has the highest average weekly earnings in Australia, the cost of living in Canberra means many households cannot afford the fundamentals of a healthy life including housing, food, transport, health services and energy.

Find out more here - <https://actcoss.org.au/news/act-community-sector-ceos-join-to-launch-2022-anti-poverty-week-and-act-poverty-factsheet>

Other ACT Anti-Poverty Week activities included:

- Anti-Poverty Week Forum, hosted by ACTCOSS and Care Financial Counselling Service, which saw leaders from across the sector gather to discuss the causes and consequences of poverty in the ACT;
- Key Canberra landmarks, including Telstra Tower, the National Carillon and the Treasury Building, lit up in blue to symbolise a brighter future of hope for children living in poverty and raise awareness for Anti-Poverty Week.
- For a second year, the ACT Anti-Poverty Week Youth Art Competition welcomed submissions of art from ACT Youth 18 years and under; the theme was “Including Everyone” and 20 remarkable entries from young Canberrans were submitted.



Art competition winners : 'When everyone is included, it's like everyone knows everyone else' by MM, 'Let's frame our colour' by ZK and 'Inclusive is colourful' by CVK.

Reconciliation Week 2023



Members of the ACT Nannies Group

The importance and popularity of ACTCOSS Reconciliation related events and networks continues to grow.

This Reconciliation Week, the Sector Development and Gulanga Teams organised an event for members addressing the theme of *“Be a Voice for Generations”*.

The event provided a chance to listen, reflect and learn from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

The event featured a panel discussion with The ACT Nannies about cross-generational reconciliation, as well as a panel of ATSIComSec members (including our own Rachelle Kelly-Church), where they were asked a series of challenging questions in the ‘You can’t ask that’ forum style. The session was impactful, with lots of important questions and engagement from the audience.

ACT Cost of Living Report

On the 22nd of June 2023 the [ACT Cost of Living Report](#) was published, highlighting how living costs in the ACT have reached their highest levels in 20 years, focusing on the impact of these costs on women.

The report tracks changes in the cost of living for low-income households in the ACT, highlighting the gendered nature of the cost-of-living crisis.



Canberra has seen significant price increases for automotive fuel (37%), transport (23%), electricity (25%), medical and hospital services (19%), housing (21%), education (20%) and food (18%).

To alleviate cost of living pressures in the ACT, ACTCOSS called on the ACT Government to provide targeted assistance, expand social and affordable housing, adequately fund the community sector, and ensure affordable and accessible healthcare. ACTCOSS also continued to join ACOSS and call on the Commonwealth Government to raise the rate of income support payments.

The ACT Cost of Living Report highlights how affordable and accessible housing remains a top stressor for people in the bottom two quintiles in the ACT. ACTCOSS examines the cost-of-living impacts of poverty and inequality on women in the ACT. Women are more likely to experience poverty and are heavily affected by the ACT's high costs. Women are also more likely to experience unemployment and to rely on income support payments. In the report ACTCOSS urges both levels of government to ensure the impacts of poverty and inequality remain central to all policy decisions relating to gender equality. The report acknowledges that all people can be affected by poverty and rises in the cost of living, but notes women experience poverty and are affected by the high costs in the ACT in unique and specific ways. The community sector plays a vital role in assisting vulnerable Canberrans who are affected by our high cost of living.



“The community sector continues to see increased demand for support and services. Rising costs of living are having serious impact on Canberrans on low incomes.” – Dr Devin Bowles.

Leah Dwyer (YWCA Canberra), Devin Bowles (ACTCOSS), Lavinia Tyrrel (Karinya House), Travis Gilbert (ACT Shelter)

NAIDOC week 2022

ACTCOSS and the Gulanga Program led the ACT Community Sector NAIDOC Planning Committee in 2022 – the event's eighth year – working with 14 community sector organisations across the ACT to plan and deliver an important and fun event for the local Aboriginal Community and Community Sector Workers.

This year we developed a key partnership with ACT Libraries, to co-locate NAIDOC activities in Woden Library – an innovation that was welcomed by the community and committee members and repeated in 2023!

After a didgeridoo performance by Greg Joseph, and a smoking ceremony and welcome to country by Billy T, the event show-cased local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers including Tahalianna Soward-Mahanga, Alinta Barlow and the Yukembruk Dance Group. The event hosted activities for all ages including a bush tucker demonstration, face-painting by Kristie Peters, yarning circle with Dean Freeman, and children's performances by Johnny Huckle and the Winanggaay Ngunnawal Language Aboriginal group.

Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses sold arts and crafts on the day, and free food and coffee was provided for attendees. Organisers estimate around 400 people joined in the day's celebrations.

As part of our ongoing support for NAIDOC Week, ACTCOSS coordinated the Canberra & District Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Sector Worker of the Year Award again for 2022. This award recognizes the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander volunteers and workers at the forefront of the community sector's vital work their commitment, contribution, and achievements. In 2022 it was won by Katrina Faulder, former staff member at Carers ACT.



Smoking Ceremony NAIDOC Event 2022

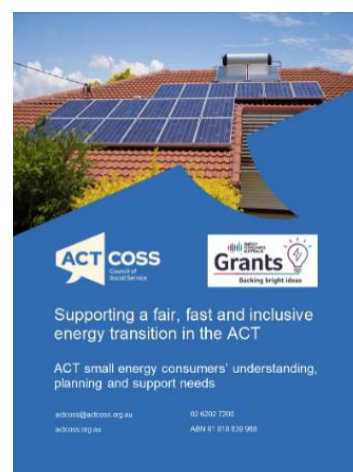


CEO Emma Cambell and Rachele Kelly-Church closing.

Energy research and reports

ACTCOSS received funding from Energised Consumer Australia and Evo Energy during the 2022-23 year, to continue our important research and advocacy in the energy and climate change space. This includes attendance at numerous consultations, working groups and reference groups. As a result of this work, the following key reports were produced.

The ACTCOSS [Supporting a fair, fast and inclusive energy transition in the ACT](#) report builds on the ACTCOSS report: [A Just and Inclusive Gas Transition in the ACT](#) and highlights some of the barriers that vulnerable households face on the pathway to electrification. Many Canberrans are feeling the pinch of the rising cost of living, however low-income households and renters are particularly vulnerable to energy hardship due to the often poor-quality, energy inefficient housing, inefficient appliances and having less money to spend on transition. It is discussed that an estimated 9% of Canberrans live below the poverty line. The increase in cost of living has consequences for individual health, mental health, and wellbeing as well as productivity in workplaces.



ACTCOSS supporting a fair, fast and inclusive energy transition in the ACT

The [Just and Inclusive Gas Transition in the ACT Report](#) notes that fossil-fuel gas use accounts for 20% of greenhouse gas emission in the ACT. The Report follows the ACT Government's announcement that it will phase out fossil fuel gas by 2045 by electrifying Canberra over the next two decades. This report highlights the need for equity to be front and center of phasing out fossil-fuel gas. Climate change is a social justice issue that affects individuals both globally and within our community. It is discussed how climate action through mitigation and adaptation measures must not entrench or exacerbate disadvantage. Instead, climate action should aim to reduce poverty and inequality and improve wellbeing. The Just and Inclusive Gas Transition in the ACT report aims to ensure that equity is placed front and center in the development of the Integrated Energy Plan, so that a just and inclusive transition is enabled.



A Just and Inclusive Gas Transition in the ACT

“ACTCOSS plays a vital role keeping governments accountable, transparent and honest.” – Quote from ACTCOSS member

Objective One: Improved income, wellbeing, equity, and inclusion outcomes for people in the ACT and region who are marginalised.

ACT Budget 2023-24

Once again this year, ACTCOSS provided valuable support and service to members around the ACT Budget. Leading up to the release of the 2023-24 ACT Budget, ACTCOSS partnered with the ACT Government to hold three community sector pre-budget consultations, including one specifically for smaller organisations. These consultations were an opportunity for the sector to communicate directly with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate on their budget priorities. ACTCOSS also used this briefing to inform our 2023-24 Budget Priorities document.

ACTCOSS made a comprehensive submission to the ACT Budget 2023-24 consultation and responded following the Budget release with our [ACT Budget Bulletin 2023-24](#). ACTCOSS organised the much respected post-budget forum, providing an opportunity for member organisations to ask direct questions to Ministers regarding Budget investments.

ACTCOSS will be monitoring these measures to help ensure there is an appropriate distribution of funding between ACT Government services and the community sector.

Sharing our work with the Community

ACTCOSS continued in 2022-23 to influence public opinion and our members through our engagement with local media, addressing a breadth of issues affecting the community sector organisations and vulnerable Canberrans.

ACTCOSS advocacy and work was mentioned approximately 400 times across print, radio and television during the year.



ABC RoGS interview, Dr Gemma Killen

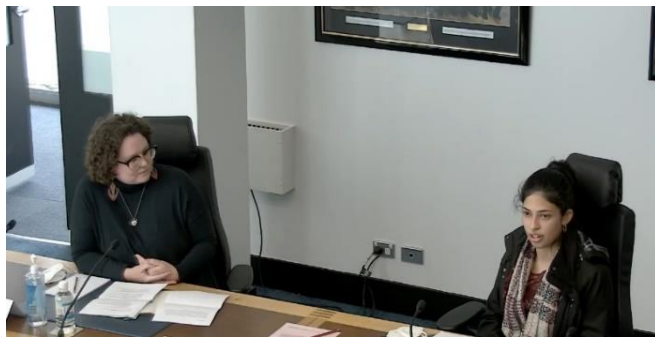
Hearings attended by ACTCOSS

During the 2022-23 period, ACTCOSS strength in systemic advocacy and policy advice continued. Evidence is derived from the voices ACTCOSS represents including people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. Alongside the ACTCOSS Gulanga team, ACTCOSS prioritised issues disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in our submissions and meetings with government officials and ministers.

ACTCOSS was invited to present evidence to 13 hearings, the majority of which were held by Legislative Assembly committees, including

- Inquiry into Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill
- Inquiry to Abortion and Reproductive Choice in the ACT
- Inquiry into Cost of Living
- Housing and Rental Affordability Inquiry
- Inquiry into Justice (Age of Criminal responsibility) Legislation Amendment Bill
- Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023.

ACTCOSS's engagement with hearings demonstrates our reputation within government and ongoing commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and democratic participation. Participating in intentional constructive dialogue with policymakers enables us to bridge the gap between grassroots community connections and high-level policy influence.



*Inquiry into Period Products and Facilities Bill.
Dr Gemma Killen and Avan Daruwalla*

Objective Two: A sustainable and empowered ACT community sector

Commissioning

Throughout 2022-23, ACTCOSS engaged with commissioning reforms at both a whole system level and through specific processes. ACTCOSS hosted 8 monthly online commissioning drop-ins to hear members views and inform participants about how ACTCOSS has used these views to influence government. ACTCOSS involvement in individual commissioning cycles included several key matters : transparency of communication, timeframes, and ensuring appropriate representation and consideration of issues related to the LGBTQIA+ community and other priority populations.

In 2021, ACTCOSS facilitated a major research project, resulting in the influential [Counting the Costs Report](#). The Government's response to the report, released in January 2023, agreed to one recommendation in full, and agreed in principle to the remaining five recommendations.

Significantly, the recommendation to revise the indexation rate was used in the 2023-24 Budget for the first time. ACTCOSS continues to work in partnership with the Government to implement a Sector Sustainability Project to scope additional work to implement these recommendations in future.

Community facilities

Through a Community Facilities Advisory Group, ACTCOSS has continued to work with tenants of the ACT Property Group (ACTPG) and the Government to improve maintenance of current properties and identify future needs and issues of the community sector. The Advisory Group represents 35 community facilities and organisations across the Territory.

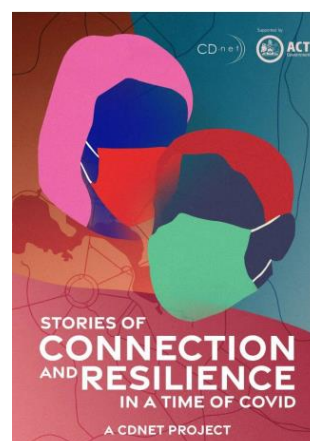
The group is working towards an increased investment in maintenance, renewal, and development to allow community organisations to better operate and deliver services to the local community.

CDNet

Community Development Network of the ACT and Region (CDNet) is a support network for community development workers and those interested in community development principles and practices. CDNet held two Community of Practice events, with an attendance of 20-30 people focusing on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and co-design. The CDNet email list also continues to be an extremely valuable resource for the ACT community sector with over 2,000 subscribers.

CDNet's purpose is to:

- Share information through an email distribution list on current trends, good practice and activities relevant to community development.
- Provide information on the role of community development, ensuring a sound foundation for healthy and sustainable communities.
- Coordinate ACT Community Development Community of Practice (CDCOP) to provide discussion and learning through seminars, workshops, and conferences.
- Maintain CDNet website and email distribution.



CDNet also launched a resource booklet in October 2022, with stories highlighting a unique oral history and a record of community-led responses to COVID in 2019-20 in the ACT.

CDNet Stories of Connection and Resilience in a time of Covid

This project shows how the ACT community has built its connectedness and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

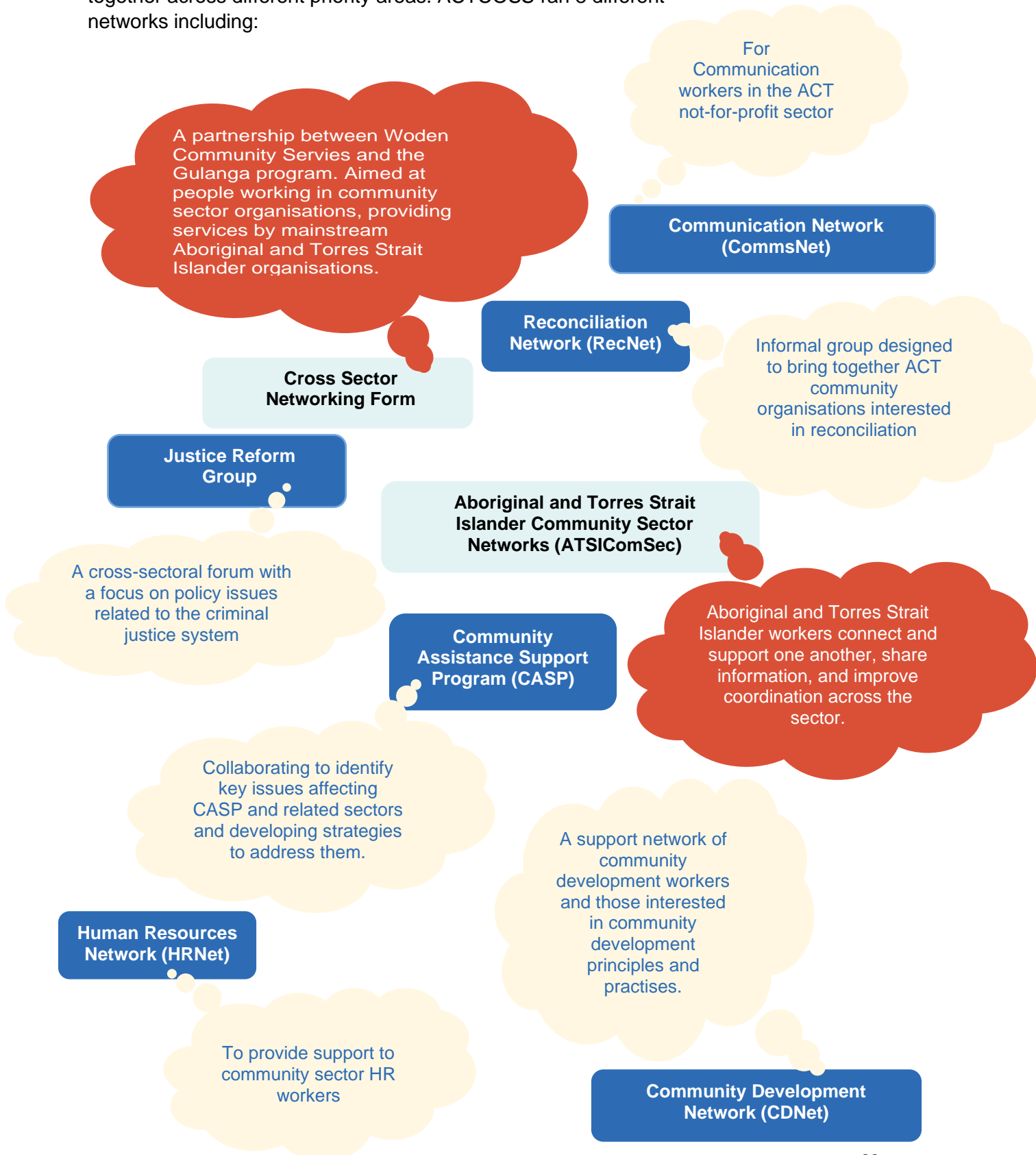
Follow this link to go to the e-booklet: [Stories of Connection and Resilience \(cdnet.org.au\)](https://www.cdnet.org.au) or <https://www.cdnet.org.au/resources/stories-of-connection-and-resilience.html>



CDNet Community of Practice

Networks

ACTCOSS brought together member organisations to network, discuss common issues and share information. Peer networks allow for different community sector workers to work together across different priority areas. ACTCOSS ran 8 different networks including:



Learning and Development

During the 2022-23 period ACTCOSS continued to prioritise support for member organisations and community sector workers. ACTCOSS held 12 training and information sessions, with over 150 attendees. These sessions included:

- Grant Writing Workshop
- Board Basics – Governance Introduction
- Advocacy Training
- Understanding the ACT Legislative Assembly
- The ACT Wellbeing Framework Info Session
- Understanding the ACT Budget Process for the Community Sector
- Fee Free TAFE courses info session
- The ACT Integrity Commission info session

These training sessions have helped provide new information for attendees and further support skill development. We look forward to providing regular free information sessions for members or areas relevant to the sector in respect to the ACT Government processes services.

ACTCOSS provides free resources and information via our website - [Capacity Building Resources - ACTCOSS](#)

“Great experience, I had only been in the job for two weeks, but it gave me some tools to use as I move forward. I would love to return in a year’s time once I have applied for a few more grants to gain more insight and skills.” – Grant Writing Workshop attendee.

“I think the training space is a great one for ACTCOSS to continue to focus on. The ability to access sector-appropriate, low cost, relevant training is very valuable.” – Quote from ACTCOSS member



CASP Self-Compassion Workshop, 2022

Objective Three: A well-governed, representative and effective ACTCOSS

Investing in the future

Over the past two years, ACTCOSS have been working to reinvest financial reserves into our operations, giving our facilities, systems, and image a refresh, and positioning the organisation to continue working efficiently and professionally into the future. In 2022-23 we saw all this hard work come to an end with a new kitchen, a new brand, and a new website.

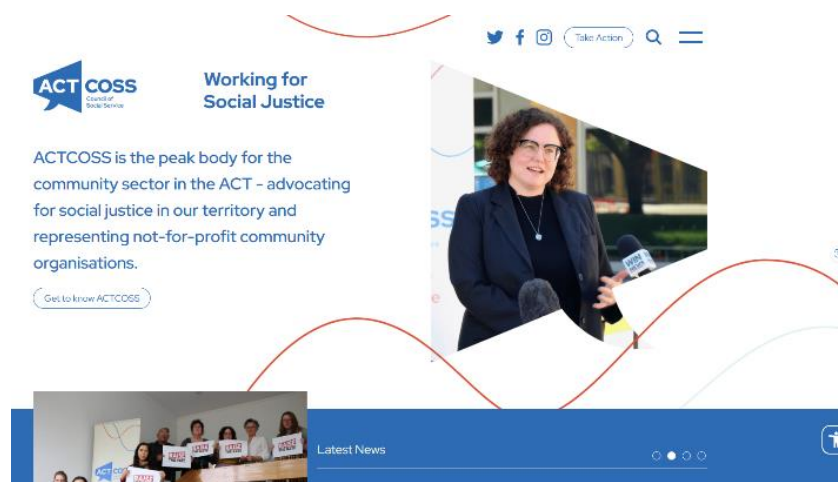


Kitchen before renovations



Kitchen after renovations

Partially funded through an ACT Government grant, ACTCOSS undertook a kitchen upgrade in the 2022-23 financial year. Following a Disability Access Audit, ACTCOSS sought to upgrade our facilities to ensure a safe and accessible space for all staff and visitors. The kitchen improvements also aid staff to better support the training, workshops and meetings often hosted by ACTCOSS in its role as a Community Sector Peak with improved storage, functionality, and a dishwasher.



New ACTCOSS website

ACTCOSS's new website, which launched in June 2023, is not only more modern and professional looking, but now enables us to manage events in-house, create distribution lists to better communicate with members, and improve accessibility of information.

Reconciliation Action Plan

In November 2022 ACTCOSS created its third Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), continuing to support reconciliation to overcome the causes of inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. ACTCOSS's primary purpose is the advancement of social justice. This includes speaking out against systematic racism, and linking our policy and capability work to Closing the Gap outcomes.

The [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) will help ACTCOSS to realise our vision through:

- Cultivating appreciation and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to staff, members, and other stakeholders.
- Growing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ACTCOSS membership and positions of influence; and
- Providing additional support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community sector workers to engage in ACTCOSS programs and advocacy.

Current priorities in our Reconciliation work include developing a Cultural Learning framework, reviewing HR practices, policies and developing better ways to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in our work.



*'Connected Communities' by
Rachelle Kelly-Church*

Member Forums

ACTCOSS continues to host bi-monthly Member Forums, providing an opportunity for Members to get together and discuss areas of interest or concern with ACTCOSS and each other. These forums provide a great opportunity for ACTCOSS to share with members the work we are undertaking, seek input into important areas of our work, and build relationships.

"ACTCOSS does a great job as a peak, and also working with other subsector peaks. Keep up the great work!" – Quote from ACTCOSS member

COSS Networks

ACTCOSS continues to work closely with our COSS network partners, attending regular CEO, Policy, and Sector Development networks, as well as collaborating on major policy and social justice campaigns.

Gulanga Program

The Gulanga Program is designed to support ACT community sector organisations to develop and improve upon good, culturally appropriate practice standards. The program employs Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers and aims to provide better engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and their families to access the services that will best meet their needs.

The program was supported by funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), which is jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments, and the Child, Youth and Family Services Program (CYFSP), an ACT Government funded initiative.

During the 2022-23 period, the Gulanga Program continued to prioritise supporting and building the skill capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. This was done by assisting mainstream services to improve on cultural awareness and responsiveness, and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives were at the forefront of the ACT Government's policy and program development and law reform.



A new Reconciliation Calendar Poster was introduced in 2023. The calendar reflects on our shared history to map events that have shaped the reconciliation journey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community. This figure is the commissioned artwork for the Reconciliation Poster, created by Rachelle Kelly-Church and called "Seasons".

To view or download this poster go to [Reconciliation Calendar Poster](https://actcoss.org.au/publication/reconciliation-calendar-poster/) or <https://actcoss.org.au/publication/reconciliation-calendar-poster/>

Training and information sessions

The Gulanga Program hosted a total of 8 training/forum sessions this year. These sessions which continue to be well attended included:

- Cultural Awareness Workshop with Julie Moore (Koorimunication)
- Strategic Cultural Awareness Workshop with Grant Sarra
- Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training for Adults and Youth

These training/forum sessions allowed for participants to learn and improve on cultural competency and delivery of cultural awareness. To find information about upcoming sessions visit [Events and Training - ACTCOSS](#).

Cross Sector Network

The [Cross Sector Network](#) brings together mainstream services, programs or organisations to present and provide relevant cultural information. It allows for mainstream services to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, how they operate and how they can be referred to. Two forums were held this year and had over 90 participants in attendance. These forums focused on women's refuge services, drug and alcohol programs and disability services in the ACT.

"The visual presentation was great, and having access to it afterwards was good, as it can be shared amongst my colleagues." - Cross Sector audience member.

ATSIComSec

The [ATSIComSec Network](#) is a Gulanga program which facilitates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers to connect, support one another, share information and improve coordination across the sector. ATSIComSec also allows the opportunity to see and hear from members of the ACT Nannies Group, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) and invited guests from various agencies. ATSIComSec members were also invited to join ACTCOSS run training events including:

- Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid workshop (adults and youth)
- Monitoring and Evaluation training
- Grant Writing workshops
- Media training workshops

This participation supports self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ACT Nannies Group

The Gulanga Program hosted the ACT Nannies Group each week at ACTCOSS for the purpose of their meetings and consultations.

Member Support and Consultation

The Gulanga program continued to work with a range of mainstream sector organisations to improve cultural competency and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. These meetings build and foster connections across the sector, provide advice and guidance to senior leadership about staffing matters, recruitment and retention, program development and community engagement.

ACTCOSS Board

Director	Board meetings attended	Apologies
Jeremy Halcrow, The Benevolent Society Chair	5/6	1
Lisa Kelly, Carers ACT Ordinary Director (to Nov 2022) Vice Chair (from Nov 2022)	6/6	–
Blessy Pascual, Treasurer (from Nov 2022)	3/4	1
Andrew Rowe, Associate Member Vice Chair (to Nov 2022)	2/2	–
Hassan Riaz, ANUSA Treasurer (to Nov 2022)	1/2	1
Mainul Haque, Associate Member, Ordinary Director (to Nov 2022)	2/2	–
Andrew Scotford, CIT Student Association Ordinary Director	6/6	–
Cathi Moore, Associate Member Ordinary Director	4/6	2
Alicia Flack-Kone, ACT Down Syndrome Association Ordinary Director	5/6	1
Fiona Looney, Relationships Australia Canberra & Region Ordinary Director	6/6	–
Melissa Bell, Barnardos Ordinary Director	5/6	1
Liam McNicholas, Northside Community Service Ltd Ordinary Director (to March 2023)	4/4	–
Amanda Tobler, Associate Member Ordinary Director (from Nov 2022)	4/4	–
Tracey Hall, Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT Ordinary Director (from Nov 2022)	3/4	1
Sue Webeck, Domestic Violence Crisis Service Ordinary Director (from Nov 2022)	3/4	1

Organisation Members

A Gender Agenda
ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations
ACT Disability, Aged & Carer Advocacy Service Inc.
ACT Down Syndrome Association Inc
ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc
ACT Playgroups Association Inc.
ACT Shelter
Advocacy for Inclusion
Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT Inc
Amnesty International ACT/SNSW
Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
ANTaR ACT
ANU Students' Association
Argyle Community Housing
Asthma Australia
Australian Association of Social Workers ACT Branch
Australian Red Cross - ACT/SE NSW
Australian Unemployed Workers' Union - Canberra Branch
Barnardos Australia
Benevolent Society, The
Canberra & Q'yan ADD Support Group Inc.
Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD)
Canberra Community Law
Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association
Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc.
Canberra Police Community Youth Club (PCYC)
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
Canberra Refugee Support Incorporated
Canberra Youth Residential Services
Capital Health Network
Capital Region Community Services
Care Inc
Carers ACT Inc.
CHC Affordable Housing
Children Australia Inc.
Communities@Work
Community Connections
Community Medics Australia Limited
Community Radio 2XX Inc
Community Services #1
Companion House
Conflict Resolution Service Inc.
Conservation Council ACT Region
Council on the Ageing ACT
Dementia Australia ACT
Directions Health Services
Domestic Violence Crisis Service
Doris Women's Refuge Inc.
Duntroon Community Centre
Environmental Collective Housing Organisation Inc.
EveryMan Australia Inc.
Families ACT Inc.
Fearless Women Incorporated

Foundation for Indigenous Recovery & Development, Aust. (FIRDA)
Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
Havelock Housing Association Inc
headspace Tuggeranong (Grand Pacific Health)
Health Care Consumers' Association
Hepatitis ACT Inc
Karinya House Home for Mothers & Babies Inc
Karralika Programs Inc.
Kidsafe ACT
Majura Women's Group
Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
Menslink Inc.
Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
Mental Health Foundation
Mental Illness Education ACT
Meridian Inc
My Coaching My Future
Nexus Human Services
Northside Community Service Ltd.
Palliative Care ACT
Parentline ACT Inc.
Pegasus Riding for the Disabled Inc.
Perinatal Wellbeing Centre
Prisoners Aid (ACT) Inc.
Rebus Theatre
Red Nose
Relationships Australia Canberra and Region Inc.
Religious Society of Friends Canberra Inc.
Roundabout Canberra
RSI & Overuse Injury Association of the ACT, Inc.

SEARMS Aboriginal Corporation
Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT Inc.
Sharing Places Inc.
Sisters In Spirit Aboriginal Corporation
Softlaw Community Projects Limited
St John's Care
St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
Tender Funerals Canberra Region
The Mill House Ventures
The Smith Family
This Is My Brave Australia Inc.
TJILLARI Justice Aboriginal Corporation
Toora Women Inc.
Tuggeranong Link Community Houses and Centres Inc
UCA Canberra Region Presbytery
Uniting
UnitingCare Kippax
Victim Support ACT
VolunteeringACT
Warehouse Circus Inc.
Wellcare Australia
Wellways Australia
Woden Community Service Inc.
Women With Disabilities ACT
Women's Health Matters Inc.
Women's Legal Centre (ACT Region) Inc.
Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation
Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation
Youth Coalition of the ACT
YWCA Canberra

Associate Members

Z. Adamaly	K. Duggan	J. Kitchin	H. Rocek
L. Akauola	P. Dwyer	N. Kitchin	P. Rokic
J. Anlezark	S. Ellerman	J. Le	S. Rosenberg
C. Ansted	J. Esdaile	D. Lucas	A. Rowe
D. Bakon	A. Ferguson	K. Lyttle	P. Saggiu
V. Begonjia	L. Grehg	K. martin	E. Samara
A. Boisen	A. Gupta	J. McGee	C. Sefian
E. Bourke	M. Hansen	B. McKail	B. Slatyer
J. Carty	M. Haque	A. McLaughlin	U. Srivastave
H. Cornthwaite	S. Helyar	P. Messent	G. Stevens
K. Cox	L. Hemmings	C. Moore	H. Swift
J. Craig	L. Honcope	L. O'Brien	D. Tshering
J. Crawford	P. Humphries	K. Ormston	E. Wensing
T. Davidson	L. Jard	W. Palmer	
T. Dodwell	L. Kelly	B. Papps	
M. Douglas	P. Kendall	R. Refshauge	
C. Wheatland			

Thank you!

actcoss@actcoss.org.au

02 6202 7200

actcoss.org.au

ABN 81 818 839 988

