# Minutes of the 2023 ACTCOSS Annual General Meeting

Held 2:00pm, Tuesday 21 November 2023

At Denman Village Community Centre

## Attendees, proxies and apologies

### Organisation Member Delegates and Associate Members in attendance

**Name Organisation/Associate**

Amanda Tobler Associate Member

Susan Helyar Associate Member

Alicia Flack-Kone ACT Down Syndrome Association

Tracey Hall Anglicare

Sarah Murdoch Anglicare

Anita Mills ATODA

Jeremy Halcrow The Benevolent Society

Kiki Korpinen Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

Lisa Kelly Carers ACT

Simon Bennett Community Services #1

Linda Trompf Health Care Consumers Association

Lavinia Tyrrel Karinya House

Karen McKernan Mental Health Foundation

Zakia Patel Multicultural Hub Canberra

Anna Whitty Northside Community Service

Fiona Loaney Relationships Australia Canberra & Goulburn

Stephanie Hodson Relationships Australia Canberra & Goulburn

Shobha Varkey Religious Society of Friends Canberra Inc

Peter Sutherland Softlaw Community Projects Ltd

Kwadwo Owusu St Vincent De Paul Society

Lucy Hohnen St Vincent De Paul Society

Catherine Cook Volunteering ACT

Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez Woden Community Service Inc

Jenny Kitchin Woden Community Service Inc

Lauren Anthes Women’s Health Matters

Cara Jacobs YWCA

Frances Crimmins YWCA

### Others in attendance

Brandon Howard Anglicare

Tenille Abell Anglicare

Dr Devin Bowles ACTCOSS

Stephanie Crosby ACTCOSS

Tashi Choden ACTCOSS

Corinne Dobson ACTCOSS

Luise Zolio ACTCOSS

Lyndsay Bassett ACTCOSS

Heather Fitt ACTCOSS

Emma Hawke ACTCOSS

### Apologies Received From

Ed Wensing Associate Member

Mainul Haque Associate Member

Cathi Moore Associate Member / Parentline

Dianne Lucas Associate Member

Dalane Drexler ACT Mental Health Consumer Network

Melissa Bell Barnardos

Michael Dunne Barnardos

David Baxter CAHMA

Michell Colefax Communities@work

Darlene Cox Health Care Consumers Association

Lea Grant My Coaching My Future

Julia Burns My Coaching My Future

Hannah Andrevski Roundabout Canberra

Lisa Griffiths OzChild

### Proxies Exercised

**Member / Delegate name Organisation**

Dianne Lucas Associate Member

Cathi Moore Associate Member / Parentline

Dalane Drexler ACT Mental Health Consumer Network

Michael Dunne Barnardos

## 1. Meeting open and Welcome to Country

Jeremy Halcrow, ACTCOSS Board Chair (the Chair) opened the meeting.

Bradley Bell delivered a Welcome to Country.

## 2. Apologies

The Chair thanked Bradley for the Welcome to Country and read out the list of apologies for the meeting (listed above).

## 3. Housekeeping

The Chair noted the following housekeeping matters.

Those wishing to vote should visit the registration desk and collect your voting card if not already done.

Other documents available:

* Agenda
* Financial report
* Minutes from the 2022 AGM
* Information about Board nominees
* Voting instructions
* 2022-2023 Annual report

Photography and privacy

The chair noted that we will be taking photographs today, which may be used for our annual report, or on social media or on the ACTCOSS website. If you do not wish to have your photo taken, please tell the registration desk, or Tashi with the camera.

## 4. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting (2022) and matters arising

The Minutes of the 2022 AGM were distributed to members with the papers for the AGM and provided at the registration desk today.

No actions were arising from the 2022 minutes.

Regarding the minutes from the 2022 AGM, we have received no amendments prior to the meeting. The Chair called for any comments or changes, no amendments noted.

The Chair invited a member to move that the 2022 AGM minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record of the previous Annual General Meeting.

*Moved : Amanda Tobler (Associate) Second : Alicia Flack-Kone (ACTDSA)*

*The Chair called for a show of hands for those in favour and against. The motion was passed with none against.*

5. Election of Board Members

The meeting now moved to the election of Board members and the Chair welcomed the Returning Officer, Peter Sutherland, to guide us through the election of the Board.

Chair

Peter noted that one nomination was received for Chair, from Jeremy Halcrow (The Benevolent Society) and in accordance with Rule 3.3(3) of the ACTCOSS Constitution, this position is deemed elected, and no vote is required. The position will be declared following the other Board elections.

Ordinary Directors

The returning officer outlined the nominations and voting procedure as follows. The returning officer noted that he would not exercise his own vote, as an ACTCOSS member delegate, but had been given a proxy vote from Dianne Lucas, and would exercise that vote as directed.

Seven (7) nominations were received for three (3) Ordinary Director positions.

The nominations received for Ordinary Director positions are:

* Lauren Anthes, Women’s Health Matters
* Chris Gough, Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation
* Edith Graham, Canberra Community Law
* Mainul Haque, Associate Member
* Lucy Hohnen, St Vincents De Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
* Zakia Patel, Multicultural Hub Canberra
* Shobha Varkey, Religious Society of Friends Canberra.

Voting process

The returning officer outlined the voting process, noting that voter should place a mark next to the 3 candidates of your choice. They can be numbered 1 to 3 or can also use a cross or a tick in up to 3 boxes. If numbered beyond 3, only 1 to 3 will be counted. If using ticks or crosses, if there are more than three on the paper the vote will be invalid.

Once voted, ACTCOSS staff collected the voting papers in ballot envelopes. The returning officer and two ACTCOSS staff members left the room to count the votes.

6. Chair’s report on 2022-23 activities

The Chair read their report on activities for 2022-23

“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.

TheACTCOSS 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](https://actcoss.org.au/publication/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 Stephen-Smith and Minister Steel. 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.”

No questions were asked and the Chair called for a member to move that the Chair’s report be accepted.

Moved: Frances Crimmins (YWCA), Second: Anna Whitty (Northside Community Service).

The Chair then handed over to the Treasurer, Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez.

7. 2022-23 financial statements

The Treasurer noted that the copies of the audited financial statements were made available via email prior to the meeting and paper copies at the registration desk.

The Treasurer presented the financial position of the organisation with accompanying PowerPoint presentation with the following key points:

* Net income for the year was $65,985;
* The organisation has strong cash reserves;
* Majority of income remains from ACT Government, with expenditure is predominantly employee costs;
* In key financial metrics used by the Board, ACTCOSS remains ahead of industry standard.

The Treasurer asked for any questions or amendments – none were noted. The Treasurer then asked that the meeting accept the audited financial statements.

*Moved : Frances Crimmins (YWCA) Second : Fiona Loaney (Relationships Australia). Motion was passed.*

8. Appointment of auditors for 2023-24

The Treasurer noted that following 6 years with Vincents Assurance as ACTCOSS auditor, the Board undertook a tender process, seeking proposals for the 2023-24 financial audit of ACTCOSS.

Following this process, the Board of ACTCOSS agreed and recommends to the members that BellchambersBarrett be appointed as ACTCOSS auditor for the financial year ending 30 June 2024.

The Treasurer asked for a member to move that BellchambersBarrett be appointed as our auditor for the current financial year.

*Moved : Stephanie Hodson (Relationships Australia) Second : Cara Jacobs (YWCA).*

## 9. CEO’s report

The CEO, Dr Devin Bowles, presented his report.

“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.”

The CEO called for a member to move that the report be accepted.

*Moved* : Jeremy Halcrow (The Benevolent Society) Second : *Alicia Flack-Kone (ACTDSA).*

## 10. Appointment of Public Officer

The Chair noted that in accordance with our Constitution, the Board seeks confirmation from the Membership that Amanda Tobler will assume the role of Public Officer for the 2024 year, following the resignation of our previous Public Officer, Alicia.

The Chair asked all in favour of the motion to raise their hand, and all those against. The role was confirmed by majority.

## 11. Declaration of Board positions

The returning officer addressed the meeting, to announce the Board for 2022-23.

The returning officer declared the role of Chair filled by Jeremy Halcrow, The Benevolent Society, who was nominated for the position unopposed.

He noted that valid ballots had been cast, with no ties, and so the successful candidates elected to the Board were:

* Lauren Anthes Women’s Health Matters
* Zakia Patel Multicultural Hub Canberra
* Lucy Hohnen St Vincents De Paul Society

Ballot papers would be destroyed after 28 days.

The returning officer also noted the continuing Board members :

* Vice Chair : Lisa Kelly, Carers ACT
* Treasurer : Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez, Woden Community Services
* Andrew Scotford, CIT Student Association
* Fiona Loaney, Relationships Australia Canberra & Region
* Melissa Bell, Barnardos
* Amanda Tobler, Community Services #1
* Sue Webeck, DVCS
* Tracey Hall, Anglicare

## Acknowledgement of outgoing Board members

Thank you to all the people who have contributed to the work of the ACTCOSS Board in the past year, noting that this is a voluntary role and people give a lot of time to the work.

Thanks to Liam McNicholas, who resigned during the 2023 year, for your service to the ACTCOSS Board.

As I noted earlier, we also bid farewell and thank the Board members who are not continuing following this AGM.

• Alicia Flack Kone, and

• Cathi Moore

Alicia was presented with a small gift of thanks for her commitment and hard work.

## General business

None noted

## Meeting close

The meeting was formally closed by the Chair and members were invited to remain for afternoon tea