

Minutes of the 2024 ACTCOSS Annual General Meeting

Held 3:30pm, Tuesday 19 November 2024
At Denman Village Community Centre

Attendees, proxies and apologies

Organisation Member Delegates and Associate Members in attendance

Name	Organisation/Associate
Cathi Moore	Associate Member
Dianne Lucas	Associate Member
Emma Street	Associate Member
Amanda Tobler	Associate Member
Susan Helyar	Associate Member
Murray Brown	ANTAR ACT
Kate Buckmaster	Barnardos Australia
Melissa Bell	Barnardos Australia
Farzana Choudhury	Canberra Community Law
Lisa Kelly	Carers ACT Inc.
Sue Webeck	Domestic Violence Crisis Service
Blanca Reyes	Mental Illness Education ACT
Joshua Anlezark	Meridian Inc
Dan English	Northside Community Services Ltd.
Fiona Loane	Relationships Australia Canberra & Region
Shobha Varkey	Religious Society of Friends Canberra
Lucy Hohnen	St Vincent De Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
Kwadwo Owusu	St Vincent De Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez	Woden Community Services Ltd.
Jenny Kitchin	Woden Community Services Ltd.
Jeremy Halcrow	The Benevolent Society
Lauren Anthes	Women's Health Matters
Cara Jacobs	YWCA Canberra

Aimee Kent

UnitingCare Kippax

Others in attendance

Dr Devin Bowles	ACTCOSS
Stephanie Crosby	ACTCOSS
Emma Agostino	ACTCOSS
Corinne Dobson	ACTCOSS
Michelle Barclay	ACTCOSS
Holly Freeman	ACTCOSS

Apologies Received From

Andrew Scotford	CITSA
Anita Mills	ATODA
Carley Jones	ACT Playgroups Association Inc.
Chin KF Wong	Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc.
Darlene Cox	Health Care Consumers' Association
Ed Wensing	Associate Member
Francis Crimmins	YWCA
Hannah Watts	Youth Coalition of the ACT
Jenny Mobbs	COTA ACT
Lavinia Tyrrel	Karinya House for Mothers and Babies Inc.
Zakia Patel	Multiculture Hub Canberra
Tracey Hall	SHFPACT
Prudence Slaughter	Mental Illness Education ACT
Stacy Leavens	Capital Health Network

Proxies Exercised

Member / Delegate name	Organisation
Prudence Slaughter	MIE ACT
Julia Burns	My Coaching My Future

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 who have not visited the registration desk to do so to get the attendance confirmed.

There will be no Board elections but it is important to confirm a quorum of members and record voting members present for other decisions made during the meeting.

Other documents available:

- Agenda
- Financial report
- Minutes from the 2023 AGM
- Financial report
- 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 Holly with the camera.

4. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting (2023) and matters arising

The Minutes of the 2023 AGM were distributed via email to members with the papers for the AGM and are available for review today.

No actions were arising from the 2023 minutes.

Regarding the minutes from the 2023 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 2023 AGM minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record of the previous Annual General Meeting.

Moved : Amanda Tobler (Associate) Second : Jenny Kitchen (WCS)

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

5. Board elections

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

Ordinary Directors

The following positions to be filled at this year's AGM:

- Treasurer for a 3-year term
- Three (3) Ordinary Board positions for a 3 year term.

One nomination was received for Treasurer, and in accordance with Rule 3.3(3) of the ACTCOSS Constitution, this position was deemed elected at the AGM. The nomination received and deemed elected is:

- Blessy Pascual – Gutierrez from Woden Community Services Ltd.

Congratulations Bless on your re-appointment!

Two nominations were received for three ordinary Director positions. The nominations received for Ordinary Director positions are

- Fiona Looney, Relationships Australia Canberra Region
- Melissa Bell, Barnardos Australia

Once again, in accordance with Rule 3.3(3) of the ACTCOSS Constitution, these positions will be deemed elected at the AGM as there are less nominees than vacancies.

Congratulations Fiona and Melissa on your appointments as well!

In accordance with Section 3.3(2) of the Constitution, there will remain a casual vacancy on the Board until such time as the board wishes to co-opt an additional member of the 2025 AGM.

The Chair congratulated the returning Board members and noted the Board plans for pursuing an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Board member.

6. Chair's report on 2023-24 activities

The Chair read their report on activities for 2023-24

Our election advocacy priorities focused on four areas aligned with our strategy: housing and homelessness; cost of living; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination; and support for the community sector.

The team had real successes in the areas of housing and homelessness, and cost of living. The development of our election strategy throughout this financial year has brought the opportunity to unify our membership in common cause, reinforcing the message that not only are ACT community services significantly underfunded but that this funding shortfall threatens the essential support that so many people depend on. The goal was to explain to prospective voters that nearly all Canberrans use community services each year, often without even realising it. We serve them across the whole life span, but particularly at those points of vulnerability and life transition. Increased funding for community services not only means better support for people in need, but reduced social isolation and a healthier, more resilient Canberra community. In addition to policy commitments, we have made significant strides in improving our political leaders' understanding of the true cost of delivering essential community services.

There was less engagement from the major political parties on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination than we had hoped. From the ACTCOSS Board perspective, supporting a thriving ACCO ecosystem in the local community sector will continue to be a major area of commitment. The ACTCOSS Board is very conscious of our responsibilities to 'walk the talk' on self-determination by growing the independence of the Gulanga program. We have committed to explore constitutional reform to ensure dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the ACTCOSS board as well as a model of co-determined governance of the Gulanga Program. We are currently in conversation with Community to achieve these aims.

Finally, I want to thank our CEO, Dr Devin Bowles, for his calm and astute leadership of ACTCOSS throughout this year. I would also like to thank the whole ACTCOSS team for their hard work and commitment during the challenges of an ACT election year. I also want to thank my fellow directors for their wisdom and significant voluntary commitment of time, especially our Vice-Chair Lisa Kelly and Treasurer Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez for their substantial support to myself and management.

I also particularly wish to acknowledge the contribution of Andrew Scotford who completed his term on the ACTCOSS Board at this year's AGM. Andrew has contributed significantly to the Board, bringing a different perspective on key issues such as workforce development and capability building for the community sector, given his experience in the tertiary sector. We wish Andrew well for his future endeavours and hope he stays connected with ACTCOSS and the sector in other capacities.

In recent years we have been blessed with a stable board and this has contributed to a high functioning authorising environment for management and a clear strategic direction to achieve better social justice outcomes in the Territory. No questions were asked and the Chair called for a member to move that the Chair's report be accepted.

Moved: Lauren Anthes (Women's Health Matters), Second: Fiona Loaney (RACR).

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

7. 2023-24 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 \$9052;
- 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 : Blessy Pascual – Gutierrez (WCS) Second : Cathi Moore(Associate Member). Motion was passed.

8. Appointment of auditors for 2024-25

Following a successful audit process this year, the Board of ACTCOSS recommended BellchambersBarrett be reappointed as ACTCOSS auditor for the financial year ending 30 June 2025.

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

Moved : Melissa Bell (Barnardos Australia) Second : Susan Helyar (Associate member).

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 : – Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez (WCS) Second : Lucy Hohnen (Vinnies).

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 continue in the role of Public Officer for the 2025 year.

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

11. 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 Andrew Scotford, who after 6 years on the Board is not continuing in his position.

Andrew was unable to be at the meeting but will continue to engage in ACTCOSS work in his role as CEO of the CIT Student Association.

12. General business

None noted.

13. Meeting close

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