

## Minutes of the 2025 ACTCOSS Annual General Meeting

Held 3:45pm, Friday, 28 November 2025  
At Denman Village Community Centre

### Attendees, proxies and apologies

#### Organisation Member Delegates and Associate Members in attendance

| <b>Name</b>              | <b>Organisation/Associate</b>               |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Dianne Lucas             | Associate Member                            |
| Amanda Tobler            | Associate Member                            |
| Susan Helyar             | Associate Member                            |
| Murray Brown             | ANTaR ACT                                   |
| Melissa Bell             | Barnardos Australia                         |
| Farzana Choudhury        | Canberra Community Law (Returning Officer)  |
| Lisa Kelly               | Mental Health Community Coalition ACT       |
| Sue Webeck               | Domestic Violence Crisis Service            |
| Joshua Anlezark          | Meridian Inc                                |
| Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez | Associate Member                            |
| Jenny Kitchin            | Associate Member                            |
| Jeremy Halcrow           | The Benevolent Society                      |
| Lauren Anthes            | Women's Health Matters                      |
| Andrew Scotford          | CITSA                                       |
| Ed Wensing               | Associate Member                            |
| Peter Sutherland         | Softlaw Community Projects Ltd              |
| Ravi Krishnamurthy       | Australian Multicultural Action Network Inc |
| Madhumita Iyengar        | Initiatives for Women in Need Inc           |
| Ruth Zanker              | Comms@work                                  |
| Veronica Zheanoda        | ANU School of Medicine                      |
| Francis Ventura          | Kidsafe ACT                                 |
| Tracey Hall              | Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT       |

### **Others in attendance**

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Dr Devin Bowles     | ACTCOSS |
| Marie Miano         | ACTCOSS |
| Tashi Choden        | ACTCOSS |
| Penelope Davie      | ACTCOSS |
| Leanne Burke        | ACTCOSS |
| Natali Heil Koerbel | ACTCOSS |

### **Apologies Received From**

|                  |                                           |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Cathi Moore      | Associate Member                          |
| Lesley Jordan    | Comms@work                                |
| Simon Bennett    | Community Services #1                     |
| Brett Collins    | Justice Action                            |
| Yvonne Luxford   | Perinatal Wellbeing Centre                |
| Shobha Varkey    | Religious Society of Friends Canberra Inc |
| Jessi Claudianos | Australian Red Cross                      |
| Tiffany Karlsson | Canberra Rape Crisis Centre               |
| Darlene Cox      | Health Care Consumers' Association        |

### **Proxies Exercised**

| <b>Member / Delegate name</b> | <b>Organisation</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cathi Moore                   | Associate Member    |
| Lesley Jordan                 | Comms@work          |

## **1. Meeting open and Acknowledgement of Country**

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

The Acknowledgement of Country was delivered by the Chair.

## **2. Apologies**

The Chair 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 their attendance confirmed.

Documents available:

- Agenda
- Minutes from the 2024 AGM
- Information about Board nominees
- 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 other publications. If you do not wish to have your photo taken, please tell the registration desk, or Leanne with the camera.

## **4. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting (2024) and matters arising**

The Minutes of the 2024 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 2024 minutes.

Regarding the minutes from the 2024 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 2024 AGM minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record of the previous Annual General Meeting.

*Moved: Josh Anzelark (Meridian) Second: Amanda Tobler (Associate Member)*

*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:

- Vice Chair for a 3-year term
- Five (5) Ordinary Board positions for a 3-year term

One nomination was received for **Vice Chair**. 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 was:

- Lisa Kelly – Mental Health Community Coalition ACT

Congratulations Lisa on your re-appointment!

Six (6) nominations were received for five (5) **Ordinary Director** positions. In accordance with Rule 3.3(4) of the ACTCOSS Constitution, a secret ballot shall be held. The nominations received for Ordinary Director positions were:

- Amanda Tobler, Associate Member
- Francis Ventura, Kidsafe ACT
- Jessica Claudianos, Australian Red Cross
- Madhumita Iyengar, Initiatives for Women in Need Inc
- Sue Webeck, Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Tracey Hall, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT

The elected directors were:

- Amanda Tobler, Associate Member
- Jesica Claudianos, Australian Red Cross
- Madhumita Iyengar, Initiatives for Women in Need Inc
- Sue Webeck, Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Tracey Hall, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT

The Chair congratulated the new and returning Board members.

The Chair noted the appointment of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Board member by the elected body.

The Returning Officer proposed that all ballot papers will be destroyed in one month.

*Moved: Ed Wensing (Associate Member) Second: Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez (Associate Member)*

*The Chair asked for a show of hands. The motion was passed with none against.*

## **6. Chair's report on 2024-25 activities**

The Chair read their report on activities for 2024-25.

This financial year included an ACT Government election and the start of a four-year political cycle. The ACTCOSS team and our allies achieved significant policy commitments in the areas of housing and homelessness, with the most ambitious election commitments in decades. There were also important commitments in cost of living, although much work remains, especially in advancing equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Candidates' strong engagement with the ACT for Community call to action through the election campaign was particularly pleasing. And while the campaign has culminated in the ACT Government's \$10m uplift to the sector, we need to redouble our focus on this issue. This funding buys the sector time to engage with Government on making funding more sustainable for everyone, but the clock is already ticking loudly.

At the start of a new four-year parliamentary term, the ACT Government's situation is different in two important ways. Its budget situation grows increasingly dire, with the proportion of expenditure going to health growing unsustainably. Additionally, Labor is governing as a minority government, with an expanded crossbench.

ACTCOSS responded to this situation by shifting its approach to the ACT Budget. We are helping to lead the sector to provide earlier budget submissions to influence not only Treasury officials, but also other directorates which make recommendations to Treasury. This includes offering forums and workshops for the sector to discuss the approach to the ACT Government Budget. Based on meetings with the Treasurer and Treasury officials, we changed the template for our budget submission and made this publicly available to the sector. Of course, we also held our regular pre- and post-budget forums with Treasury officials and Ministers.

ACTCOSS's goal is to enhance the community sector's engagement with the budget process. This will help insulate funding for the sector and the people to whom we provide services from any budget cuts and enable us to showcase the high return on investments in social infrastructure to expand this investment.

In the context of a new Government, ACTCOSS has met with representatives from all the parties and each of the independents last financial year. In total, ACTCOSS had thirty-three meetings with MLAs.

A further indicator of the work of our small policy team is its five publications and fourteen submissions to Government over the financial year. ACTCOSS supported its members through twenty-six workshops and information sessions.

I would like to thank the whole ACTCOSS team for their thoughtful crafting of policy positions and hard work in the final run to the election. The team is starting off a new four-year term proactively and with strong strategic relationships established.

I 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 the board and management.

I particularly wish to acknowledge the contribution of Fiona Looney who stepped down from ACTCOSS Board during the year after 4 years of service. Fiona made a strong contribution to the Board, particularly as a member of our Finance and Risk Committee. We wish Fiona well for her future endeavours and hope she 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. A key focus for the Board this year has been working on our new strategic direction, and the next four-year plan is close to finalisation. The new strategy will place us in a stronger position to achieve better social justice outcomes in the Territory.

The Chair asked for questions on the report.

Members asked about ACTCOSS's position on the ACT Budget and tertiary health funding. The CEO responded with ACTCOSS's strategy on the importance on ongoing engagement with members and the ACT Government to ensure members can influence directorates and Treasury, at the earliest opportunity during policy development, reform, and budget prioritisation cycles.

With no further questions asked, the Chair called for a member to move that the Chair's report be accepted.

*Moved: Peter Sutherland (Softlaw Community Projects Ltd), Second: Tracey Hall (SHFPACT).*

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

## **7. 2024-25 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 \$39,662.
- The organisation has strong cash reserves.
- Majority of income remains from ACT Government core funding (73.7%), with expenditure predominantly attributable to employee costs (84.2%).
- In key financial metrics used by the Board, ACTCOSS remains ahead of industry standard.

The Treasurer asked for any questions or amendments. The Treasurer clarified some figures show spending across two financial years.

No amendments were proposed from the floor.

The Treasurer then asked that the meeting accept the audited financial statements.

*Moved : Blessy Pascual – Gutierrez (WCS) Second : Melissa Bell (Barnardos Australia) Motion was passed unanimously*

## **8. Appointment of auditors for 2025-26**

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 2026.

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

*Moved : Amanda Tobler (Associate Member) Second : Joshua Anzelark (Meridian)*

## **9. CEO's report**

The CEO, Dr Devin Bowles, presented his report.

"Last year was an important one for community sector advocacy in the ACT, including the ACT Legislative Assembly election and the Government's first budget of the 11th Assembly.

We refreshed our relationships with MLAs, having regard for the new composition of Government. A minority government brings fresh challenges and opportunities. Each of the parties and independents is figuring out how best to progress its agenda in this new environment, adapting their strategies in response to each other. ACTCOSS is doing the same.

As we strategise about how best to advocate for people experiencing poverty and for the community sector, ACTCOSS is thinking across the four-year election cycle. Guiding this work, our new Strategic Plan will cover four years to align with the election cycle.

ACTCOSS is coordinating the ACT for Community campaign with the other community sector peaks. This campaign aims to secure permanent increases to community sector funding that reflect the real costs of delivering services.

While it is commonplace for Governments to cry poor, the recent downgrading of the ACT Government's credit rating highlights genuine resourcing issues. In response, ACTCOSS is changing the timing and approach of our budget advocacy and supporting the community sector through capacity building and collaboration to do the same.

Our aim is to influence the directorates that are making internal budget bids to Treasury. This means bringing forward our budget submission and packaging it in a way that facilitates it being adopted to shape internal government business cases.

I acknowledge all ACTCOSS's members and other community sector organisations advocating for change. Our voices are strongest together.

I continue to be grateful to the ACTCOSS Board Chair, and Board more generally. I thank them for their wise guidance and warm encouragement. The Board's diversity of skill and depth of experience is a welcome source of wise mentorship to this role that by its nature gives rise, and must respond, to difficult questions as a matter of course.

The role of ACTCOSS CEO carries many privileges, but none is greater than being able to work with such a tremendous set of staff colleagues. Their skill, knowledge and passion are an inspiration every day.”

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

*Moved : – Ravi Krishnamurthi (Australian Multicultural) Second : Lucy Hohnen (Vinnies).*

*Accepted unanimously*

## **10. Confirmation 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. Launch of Strategic Plan**

Chair introduced the Strategic Plan for 2025-29. It was noted the Strategic Plan would be posted on the ACTCOSS website.

## **12. General business**

Motion arising from SGM:

Membership requests that the Board report back by SGM prior to the next AGM with a proposal to strengthen engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the governance of ACTCOSS, not limited to board membership.

Questions from the floor:

Timeframes – before next AGM to give time for genuine consultation.

Objective – it can be a proposal that might include a proposed amendment to the Constitution.

Should include engagement and consultation with ACCOs.

*Moved : Lisa Kelly (MHCCACT) Second : Blessy Pascual- Gutierrez (Associate Member)*

*Agreed unanimously*

## **13. Meeting close**

Thank you for the constructive discussion during the SGM. We look forward to the collegiality and contribution of our members.

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