

# Prioritising People: A person-centred approach to today's challenges

ACTCOSS Submission to the ACT Budget 2009-10  
February 2009

## Recommendations

### 1. Human Rights

- 1.1. Provide training for both Government personnel and non-government service providers on ensuring their policies, services and procedures are compliant with the amendments to the *ACT Human Rights Act*.
- 1.2. Increase funding to the ACT HRC to ensure it is able to meet its responsibilities and reduce the need for amalgamation of roles.
- 1.3. Undertake consultation on the role of the Community Services Commissioner with support for the implementation of a legislated role.
- 1.4. Engage in a wide and robust review of the *ACT Human Rights Act* that gives due consideration to the importance of the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights.

### 2. Poverty Alleviation and Financial Stress

- 2.1. Free up access to programs and services across the Budget that are designed to ameliorate economic hardship.
- 2.2. Provide additional resources to financial advisory and counselling services, sufficient to meet demand.
- 2.3. Provide additional funding for financial and material aid.

### 3. Community Sector Viability

- 3.1. Continue to provide funds to promote social inclusion among the most vulnerable in the community, as currently provided through the Community Inclusion Fund.
- 3.2. Raise funding levels and work with the community sector to close the wage gap between community sector and public sector staff.
- 3.3. Ensure all community sector funding contracts include resources for staff training, development, administrative support and supervision.

- 3.4. Fund additional programs to ensure community organisations are able to recruit and retain workers from diverse backgrounds.
- 3.5. Resource community organisations to better support their volunteers through supervision, training, management and allowances.
- 3.6. Implement the ACT Labor – ACT Greens commitment to reviewing community sector contracts and develop an equitable and effective funding strategy to address the review's outcomes.
- 3.7. Develop new processes to allow community organisations to be more involved in collaboration and negotiation of community sector funding contracts.
- 3.8. Investigate simpler and more streamlined reporting and audit requirements across government agencies.
- 3.9. Provide growth funding to all community sector funding programs that at least reflects population growth.
- 3.10. Ensure on-going community involvement in the development of community hubs.
- 3.11. Expand the community infrastructure grants program to allow for greater support for community organisations.

#### **4. Planning, Governance and Community Engagement**

- 4.1. Ensure sufficient time (a minimum of 8 weeks) for meaningful and appropriate consultation when engaging with the community.
- 4.2. Continue to engage with the community regarding the changes to citizen centred governance
- 4.3. Appoint a Minister with responsibility for all functions of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, with this portfolio as their primary responsibility.
- 4.4. Ensure governance arrangements are in place to ensure seamless policy and program arrangements across government to support the complex needs of people experiencing disadvantage.
- 4.5. Fulfil the commitment to and provide more information about the 10% public housing stock committed to in the *ACT Labor – ACT Greens Agreement*, including a timeframe and planning proposals.
- 4.6. Continue the ACT Governments history of creating neighbourhoods of mixed socio-economic status.
- 4.7. When planning and developing new suburbs include child friendly planning promoted by UNICEF; consider required services and affordable housing and; take early consideration of public transport requirements.

## 5. Impacts of Climate Change

- 5.1. Increase ACTION bus services to the outer Canberra suburbs and in off-peak periods.
- 5.2. Provide financial assistance to low income households to assist in home modifications to increase their energy efficiency, based upon the WEST model.
- 5.3. Provide support to and fund local and community based programs that assist and support communities in climate change mitigation.
- 5.4. Accelerate and expand programs to retrofit public housing properties to improve energy and water efficiency.
- 5.5. Fund a position in the ACT to engage in systemic advocacy around the needs and interests of low income and disadvantaged energy consumers.
- 5.6. Increase concessions to meet the increased costs of energy and other essential services as a result of carbon trading and other climate change measures.

## 6. Homelessness and Housing

- 6.1. Provide support to develop collaborative networks of homeless and mainstream services to ensure more effective intervention for people at risk of homelessness.
- 6.2. Provide additional funding for tenancy and other support services to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness.
- 6.3. Provide additional funding to the specialist homeless service (SAAP) sector to enhance their capacity.
- 6.4. Consult with the community sector in implementing the ACT homelessness action plan.
- 6.5. Provide additional crisis accommodation services for older people.
- 6.6. Establish a land tax concession scheme for rental properties housing low income and homeless families.
- 6.7. Provide for increased concessions for homeless people as a way of reducing financial burdens on them.
- 6.8. Provide seed funding for a 'Kids Under Cover' initiative in the ACT.
- 6.9. Require Government departments to report in the annual reports on measures they have taken to reduce homelessness, and ensure their staff are adequately trained regarding human rights.
- 6.10. Advocate for an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance to ease pressures on people paying 50% or more of their income for rental accommodation.
- 6.11. Establish a Rental Subsidy Scheme in the ACT.

- 6.12. Fund the expansion of tenancy support programs that prevent evictions, as indicated in the White Paper on homelessness.
- 6.13. Fund a brokerage service to connect long-term lessees with landlords who are interested in long-term arrangements.
- 6.14. Complete the review of the *Residential Tenancies Act (ACT) 1997* and ensure that it includes provisions to strengthen the security and amenity provided for tenants.
- 6.15. Set definite timelines and targets for a boost to the number of public housing dwellings to meet the goal of 10% of private dwellings.
- 6.16. Relax the eligibility requirements for public housing.
- 6.17. Budget to minimise expenses for public housing tenants in areas such as building maintenance.
- 6.18. Budget for upgrades to public housing stock to improve security and amenity.
- 6.19. Increase the provision of low cost community housing to meet the needs of groups with special needs.
- 6.20. Ensure that at least 20% of all new estates will comprise affordable house and land packages under \$300,000.
- 6.21. Provide for incentives to convert surplus C-grade office blocks to affordable housing.
- 6.22. Establish an ACT Mortgage Relief Fund.
- 6.23. Introduce affordable rental housing arrangements that provide higher discounts for low income target groups

## **7. Health**

- 7.1. Significantly increase the proportion of health care expenditure dedicated to PPEI strategies and services.
- 7.2. Create a coordinated approach to PPEI funding by assisting community partners to develop, implement and evaluate programs.
- 7.3. Consult with the community and key PPEI Bodies in the ACT regarding the allocation of the ACT Labor commitment of \$11.6 million over four years for health promotion and prevention.
- 7.4. Invest resources into PPEI programs targeted at people experiencing disadvantage.
- 7.5. Invest resources into assisting community sector organisations to evaluate health promotion programs, with the outlook to expand programs that are demonstrating positive outcomes amongst people experiencing disadvantage.

- 7.6. Develop a position for a consumer advocate and system navigator to assist consumers with finding the most appropriate health services within the ACT.
- 7.7. Engage teams of health professionals to staff community clinics and walk in centres including GPs.
- 7.8. Work with the Commonwealth Government to explore alternative models of remunerating GPs and other allied health professionals in order to make bulk billing a more attractive option.
- 7.9. Develop further Nurse Practitioner places in the ACT, particularly in areas of need including primary health care, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and aged care.
- 7.10. Work with the Commonwealth Government to develop strategies that assist people on concessions to access pharmaceuticals.
- 7.11. Establish a free dental health plan for people experiencing disadvantage.
- 7.12. Establish an avenue for subsidised preventative dental health checks through the public dental health system.
- 7.13. Ensure that genuine consultation processes are held regarding each project of the capital asset development plan.
- 7.14. Develop health plans that do not centralise services around the Canberra Hospital campus.
- 7.15. Examine the feasibility of developing a Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Unit within the ACT.
- 7.16. Increase the funding allocated to HACC agencies to accommodate for increasing consumer demands.
- 7.17. Investigate care options for current HACC consumers to ensure that packages and services are available to accommodate for increasingly complex needs.
- 7.18. Develop further support options for older people with dementia and mental health conditions.

## **8. Alcohol and other Drugs**

- 8.1. Develop protocols around entry, discharge and transfers between government and community AoD services.
- 8.2. Provide resources to develop a co-morbidity strategy for the government and community AoD sector.
- 8.3. Provide support for cross-sectoral training for the mental health and AoD sector
- 8.4. Provide funding for the development of integrative care models delivered by community sector and government providers in the AoD sector.

- 8.5. Support the development of an independent peak body for the AoD sector in the ACT.
- 8.6. Fund an integrated, evidence based community education program for AoD service providers and consumers and carers, on AoD conditions, emerging issues, special needs groups, prevention, treatment and service options.
- 8.7. Develop short term AoD residential treatment facilities to address the gap in AoD service provision.

## **9. Mental Health**

- 9.1. Fulfil the commitment made within *ACT Labor – ACT Greens Agreement* to allocate 30% of mental health funding to the community sector.
- 9.2. Create a community mental health development strategy to plan for growth in community sector run services.
- 9.3. Fund a community based mental health extended service hours program to assist consumers and carers outside of business hours.
- 9.4. Fund community sector led mental health peer support programs.
- 9.5. Fulfil the ACT Labor ACT Election commitment to 'Build on [the] innovative new youth and adult step up/step down facilities by commissioning a range of step up/step down services targeting identified high needs groups.'
- 9.6. Implement recommendation seventeen of the *Senate Standing Committee Report; Towards Recovery: Mental Health Services in Australia*, by providing funding to consumer-run programs.
- 9.7. Develop a position for a carer consultant within ACT Health to work alongside the consumer consultant.
- 9.8. Commit to implementing the recommendations of the joint ACT Health and HRC review of the PSU.
- 9.9. Develop appropriate supported and transitional housing models for people with mental illness in the ACT.
- 9.10. Develop holistic support programs for mental health consumers experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, similar to the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) in NSW.
- 9.11. Provide funding to community sector and/or consumer led employment programs which assist mental health consumers with training and employment and provide ongoing support.
- 9.12. Implement the recommendations of the ACTCOSS Report *No Wrong Doors* to improve care and case coordination.

- 9.13. Fund a mental health legal centre for mental health consumers based upon the Victorian model.
- 9.14. Fulfil the commitment within the ACT Labor 2008 *ACT Election Mental Health Policy*, to develop a 'community education and health promotion campaign aimed at normalising the experience of mental illness, and improving community awareness and understanding.'
- 9.15. Fund strategies to assist people with eating disorders including the training of health professionals including staff at the PSU and developing a support network for people with eating disorders and their families.

## **10. Justice**

- 10.1. Allocate resources to establish a community through-care network, with a funded secretariat consisting of community and government representatives.
- 10.2. Build additional transitional beds for men and women post-release from the AMC.
- 10.3. Engage in a properly resourced and widely consultative review of the Corrections Health Services plan and the need for a NSP program in the AMC.
- 10.4. Invest in alternative technologies that will eliminate the need for strip searching in ACT correctional facilities
- 10.5. Expand the Restorative Justice Program to include adults (where the matter does not involve family violence or sexual assault).
- 10.6. Ensure adequate on-going resourcing and planning around programs and services for young people in the BYJC, including education programs and family support programs.
- 10.7. Ensure adequate support and resourcing for an appropriate through-care network for young people who come in contact with BYJC
- 10.8. Provide support for people experiencing disadvantage who are accessing the ACAT.
- 10.9. Fulfil the commitment made in the *ACT Labor-ACT Greens Agreement* to establish a free legal centre for people experiencing homelessness and define to whom it will be available.
- 10.10. Increase funding for existing community legal centres, including those targeting women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and prisoners.
- 10.11. Fund a legally qualified advocate to provide support to people appearing before the ACAT, particularly in mental health or guardianship cases.
- 10.12. Continue to develop early intervention services across areas including family support, sexual abuse, AoD, mental health services and services for young people.

## 11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

- 11.1. Expand the availability of circle sentencing to include young people.
- 11.2. Expand the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison officers within ACT Policing, ACT Courts and Legal Aid.
- 11.3. Allocate more resources for tutorial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school children and family support.
- 11.4. Increase the number and range of alternative education programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 11.5. Increase investment in early intervention and early-childhood support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- 11.6. Increase resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific housing services.
- 11.7. Increase housing stock for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 11.8. Fund additional apprenticeship or trainee places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the ACT community sector.
- 11.9. Fund places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally appropriate counselling diploma.
- 11.10. Provide ongoing funding to ACTCOSS' Indigenous Program and explore the possibility of providing additional resources to expand the program beyond the SAAP sector.

## 12. People with Disabilities

- 12.1. Provide data on the number of people with disabilities waiting for accessible accommodation.
- 12.2. Fulfil the commitment to mandate universal design in all social housing and 15% of housing within englobo developments, as outlined in the *ACT Labor – ACT Greens Agreement*.
- 12.3. Implement recommendation 1 of the *DHCS Report on Disability Services in the ACT Consultations: Think Tank Recommendations*, to 'develop a policy framework to guide the operation of disability services that includes the development of the relationships between Government and the community sector'.
- 12.4. Continue to approach people under 65 years residing in residential aged care facilities to determine whether they require alternative accommodation.
- 12.5. Fund a program that assists people with profound disability residing within hospitals to find appropriate accommodation
- 12.6. Increase the rate of the ACTION fleet accessible bus replacement program.

- 12.7. Indicate on ACTION bus timetables whether buses are accessible for people with disabilities.
- 12.8. Provide increased and on-going funding to the pilot community bus program through the regional community services, to allow for longer operating hours, greater flexibility and streamlined booking processes.
- 12.9. Investigate alternative remuneration possibilities for wheelchair accessible taxis that would provide an improved service for people with disabilities.
- 12.10. Develop a more equitable equipment access scheme by decreasing the amount people with disabilities are expected to pay and/or introducing adult and older people equipment loan services where appropriate.
- 12.11. Fund projects that demonstrate the benefits of employing people with disabilities in workplaces in the ACT and support employers to provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to gain employment.
- 12.12. Increase funding for consumer advocates for people with disabilities in the ACT.
- 12.13. Provide additional funding for current systemic advocacy mechanisms for the disability sector in the ACT.
- 12.14. Provide additional funding for Auslan Interpreters in the ACT

### **13. Children, Youth and Families**

- 13.1. Expand support services for families dealing with mental health issues;
- 13.2. Expand the provision of alcohol and detox services, especially those which are able to accommodate both parents and their children;
- 13.3. Expand support programs for adolescents and families in conflict, including mediation services and helping to deal with violence;
- 13.4. Expand services for children with a disability;
- 13.5. Expand the provision of respite care and kinship care; and
- 13.6. Establish support programs and services that specifically target the 8-12 year old group.
- 13.7. Review the needs of young carers and establish more proactive support arrangements for them.
- 13.8. Substantially increase the level of funding provided under the Family Support Program to allow support to be provided to more people and a broader range of client groups.
- 13.9. Provide additional resources for more training and support for community organisations to deliver holistic, cross-agency support.
- 13.10. Substantially expand the Integrated Family Support Project.

- 13.11. Promote greater access to Child and Family Centres by vulnerable families.
- 13.12. Provide additional funding for literacy and numeracy programs to enhance the basic skills of both children and adults.
- 13.13. Implement the recommendations of the Vardon Review establishing an on-going child death review function in the ACT.

## **14. Women**

- 14.1. Allow for and encourage greater input from community representatives and consumers in the development of the Women and Children's Hospital.
- 14.2. Conduct an evaluation of the drug and alcohol detoxification program for women accompanied by children at Arcadia House.
- 14.3. Ensure women-only spaces are available in the new PSU and other mental health facilities in the ACT and that staff receive gender awareness training.
- 14.4. Review the 'Return to Work' Grants Program to determine ways to make this initiative more responsive of community need.
- 14.5. Assist community organisations to meet the financial requirements of a paid parental leave scheme.
- 14.6. Ensure community organisations are adequately trained and funded to meet the extra reporting requirements of gender auditing.
- 14.7. Review the *ACT Women's Plan* and develop a revised plan in consultation with the community.

## **15. Older People**

- 15.1. Develop additional funding opportunities for social and recreational programs that aim to assist older people with improving their quality of life.
- 15.2. Fulfil the ACT Labor election commitment to implement 'innovative options for providing affordable and appropriate accommodation for an ageing population.' Ensure that a range of appropriate and accessible transport options are made available to people residing within residential aged care facilities.
- 15.3. Fulfil the ACT Labor election commitment to provide \$484,000 per year for an 'in hours' locum medical service that will provide support for older people residing within aged care facilities.
- 15.4. Create further positions for Nurse Practitioners within aged care facilities.
- 15.5. Develop an early intervention screening program for dental health within residential aged care facilities.

- 15.6. Develop a dental program that provides free or subsidised dental services to older people.
- 15.7. Implement legislated protections for older people residing in retirement villages in the ACT.
- 15.8. Work with the Federal Government to introduce initiatives that assist older people with the cost of health care and medications.
- 15.9. Develop further 24 hour transitional care options to appropriately accommodate older people being discharged from hospitals.
- 15.10. Identify a site for an additional palliative care service preferably on the Southside of Canberra.
- 15.11. Fund programs within residential aged care facilities and other aged care services that provide support for older people with mental health conditions and dementia.
- 15.12. Develop positions for mental health workers such as Nurse Practitioners specialising in mental health, to work in aged care settings.
- 15.13. Fund training for aged care workers in mental health conditions and dementia.
- 15.14. Fund organisations to engage in case management and service coordination for older people with mental health conditions.
- 15.15. Fund ongoing advocacy for older people to assist them with identifying and addressing elder abuse within the ACT.
- 15.16. Provide additional resources to the Public Advocate and the Commissioner for Health Services and Services for Older People to assist older people reporting elder abuse.

## **16. People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds**

- 16.1. Develop a communications policy for ACT Government for use when engaging with multicultural communities.
- 16.2. Implement strategies that improve communication between the ACT Government and multicultural community including: promoting available services on multicultural radio, delivering public education sessions to different multicultural groups and producing translations for government consultations that are relevant to the multicultural community.
- 16.3. Introduce cultural sensitivity training for health professionals to educate them on the experiences of people from CALD backgrounds
- 16.4. Fulfil recommendation nine of the *Mental Health Consumer Participation and Carer Participation Framework* by working with people from CALD backgrounds and organisations to develop culturally appropriate consumer and carer participation strategies.

- 16.5. Fund programs that specifically target people from CALD backgrounds to raise awareness of mental health conditions and the services available for support and treatment.
- 16.6. Expand the provision of interpreter services to be available for all public institutions and ensure that community organisations are appropriately resourced to access these services.
- 16.7. Provide funding for interpreter services for people appearing before the ACT Courts or ACAT.
- 16.8. Develop additional avenues of support either in the community sector or within DHCS that assist small multicultural groups in preparing applications for funding and grants.
- 16.9. Fulfil the 2008 *ACT Election Multicultural Policy* commitment to 'fund cross-cultural training for aged care workers and relevant service providers' and provide additional funding to appropriately compensate service providers for the time taken by aged care workers to attend.
- 16.10. Fulfil the 2008 *ACT Election Multicultural Policy* commitment to explore the viability of establishing a senior citizens club, including options for using existing facilities and appropriate and accessible transport options.
- 16.11. Fulfil the 2008 *ACT Election Multicultural Policy* commitment to; provide \$100,000 to assist multicultural youth at risk of social isolation; fund a youth education program on Australia's legal system; and establish a program for young multicultural women.
- 16.12. Fund a position for a part time Burmese youth worker to engage Burmese youth within community activities and access services in the community.
- 16.13. Fund a position for a Dinka speaking youth worker to assist youth services when engaging with Sudanese youth.

## **17. Carers**

- 17.1. Work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure that carers are appropriately supported with financial compensation for the cost of care.
- 17.2. Develop strategies to assist with keeping skilled carers in the workforce, including the availability of flexible working arrangements.
- 17.3. Develop more respite care options for people with disabilities aged 25-65 years of age.
- 17.4. Develop appropriate respite options for older people with mental health conditions.
- 17.5. Create greater flexibility in respite care to meet the diversity of respite needs.