



**Recovery and Support in the
Community**
**ACTCOSS Submission on the
2003-04 ACT Budget**



March 2003

ABOUT ACTCOSS

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations and disadvantaged and low-income citizens of the Australian Capital Territory. ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS has the twin roles of representation and advocacy. The Council's objectives are the representation of people living with disadvantage, the promotion of equitable social policy and the development of a dynamic, cohesive and sustainable community sector.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc (ACTCOSS) has three main representative responsibilities, including the interests of consumers, the interests of community service providers and the sector, and the public/community interest in the Territory. It is with the interests of all three in mind that the Council provides this submission to the ACT Government as part of the process of developing the 2003-04 ACT Budget.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Phone: 02 6248-7566
Fax: 02 6247-7175
Mail: PO Box 195, Civic Square ACT 2608
E-mail: actcoss@actcoss.org.au
WWW: <http://www.actcoss.org.au>
Location: Jamieson House
43 Constitution Avenue
REID ACT 2612
Director: Mr Daniel Stubbs
Snr Policy Officer: Karen Nicholson

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SUBMISSION THEMES

ACTCOSS has five themes to amplify in its pre-Budget submission. The first responds to the recent emergency brought about by the fires that escaped from the surrounding bushland, destroying so many of Canberra's rural and suburban properties. The themes also address pre-existing needs, identified through the Council's work with the community services sector and people living with disadvantage.

The themes are:

1. Responding to need after the ACT fires;
2. Community sector viability;
3. Shortages in human services across the Territory;
4. Responding to changes identified by Government inquiries, policies and reforms; and
5. Revenue measures to fund service increases.

ACTCOSS sees all five themes as equally important areas for Government action in the 2003-04 Budget. The ordering of the issues is simply a function of the immediacy of the fires and their aftermath. Many of the problems dealt with after the fires were the same as those encountered by community organisations before the emergency: homelessness, inadequate resources to sustain a viable community sector, poverty, lack of services in some crucial areas and the need for recognition of the contribution of the community sector to the inquiry processes of the ALP Government in its first term in office for nearly a decade.

ACTCOSS congratulates the Government on its response to the recent fire emergency. The Council would now like to see that great response effort extended to ensure that the community services sector is able to continue to support people living with disadvantage and that the spirit of a supportive and caring community is not lost through inequitable distribution of resources.

SUMMARY

ACTCOSS acknowledges that the ACT Government faces a difficult task in developing the 2003-04 ACT budget. The circumstances under which the process began several months ago have now radically changed, and Canberra finds itself at the start of a long recovery process.

ACTCOSS believes that the final cost of the January ACT fires will be possible to manage within the next triennium. Good insurance practices by the Government have provided for reconstruction in most cases, with a relatively small amount being needed to meet costs that could not be covered.

The community sector, in particular, was in the forefront of meeting the need in the immediate post-fire period and needs some compensation.

The sector has also been actively participating in many of the reviews, inquiries and policy development exercises undertaken by the Government with the expectation that the sector's place in the wellbeing of the Canberra community will be recognised. ACTCOSS believes that the reconstruction process will falter if the community sector is overlooked in the budget process.

The Council therefore asserts that this is not the time for the Government to withdraw from the processes it has undertaken since coming to Government.

The following recommendations have been developed as a result of ACTCOSS' work with its various networks, groups, members and consumers. The Council sees the dedication of resources to the pre-budget process as part of its commitment to the Compact, to assist the Government in the decision-making process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: That organisations who occupy the Grant Cameron Centre be given a one month waiver of their rent to help compensate for the additional costs of providing services while unable to occupy their offices.

Recommendation 2: That community organisations applying for top-up funding be given assistance to help quantify, where possible, the added burden, and that there be provision of a general grant for organisations who are meeting additional demand from within current resources. The funds application process should also be simplified to ensure the application process itself does not cause further hardship for affected organisations.

Recommendation 3: That part of the ACT Community Fund fire emergency proceeds be made available to organisations directly and indirectly affected by the fires to allow critical incident debriefing and ongoing counselling support for an appropriate period of time.

Recommendation 4: That funding be provided to allow staff from agencies that responded to calls for assistance after the ACT fires to participate in processes leading to the development of an updated disaster management plan.

Recommendation 5: That a separate Budget document be prepared that provides an open and honest financial and qualitative explanation of the measures being taken to meet the cost of the fires. This should include reference to Appropriation Bill No. 2002-2003 (No 2) and the time frame within which the costs will be met. The document should be in cash accounting terms.

Recommendation 6: That the ACT Government provide an injection of \$2.5million to allow for recurrent costs to the community sector of the SACS award decisions of the AIRC in 2001-02.

Recommendation 7: That the ACT Government provide funds to allow for growth in the wage and salary levels of people employed under the higher SACS Award grades.

Recommendation 8: That the funding formula for service providers in the community sector be changed to ensure the costs of training, compliance, data collection and volunteer management are reflected in the funding amount. Where necessary, the ACT Government should provide community organisations with assistance to adequately cost these imposts during contract negotiations.

Recommendation 9: That the ACT Government facilitate and fund an online training portal that would provide community organisations with free or low cost training in contract compliance, business regulation and other related topics.

Recommendation 10: That Government departments be provided with funds to allow them to compensate community organisations who received less than full indexation in their 2002-03 funding.

Recommendation 11: That, working in the spirit of the Compact, a mutually agreed approach to indexation be used consistently. This mutually agreed approach should appropriately reflect the annual increases in the cost of

delivering services, and would ensure all Government departments are meeting their contractual obligations on indexing under the standard contract.

Recommendation 12: That the ACT Government go further in its efforts on behalf of the community sector to support the provision of affordable access to insurance by broadening the definition of organisations that are eligible for the ACT government-negotiated scheme and providing funding for risk-management and reduction services to the community services sector.

Recommendation 13: That the ACT Government provide for the costs of insurance when developing its funding guidelines for the community sector.

Recommendation 14: That the ACT Government set out clear policies and priorities for the maintenance and upgrading of its built assets, currently leased to community organisations to ensure that the buildings reach, and are maintained at, an appropriate standard.

Recommendation 15: That the ACT Government vest the administration and oversight of the leasing and maintenance of Government buildings that are leased to the community sector in a centralised agency.

Recommendation 16: That the Government provide funds for an upgrade of community organisations' IT infrastructure to enable the community sector to capitalise on the opportunities presented by new software applications, and to better integrate with the IT infrastructure of the public sector.

Recommendation 17: That the funding being made available through the Digital Divide Reference Group be focused on development of Community IT access centres, which would have the dual benefit of supporting disadvantaged client groups and supporting community organizations which could make the service available to their clients via a modest fee-for-service arrangement.

Recommendation 18: That the Government recognise the contribution of individuals and community organisations that participate in its major consultation activities. (See Recommendation 39 : page 40)

Recommendation 19: That the ACT Government substantially increase funding to consumer-based representative organisations with a view to obtaining high quality, direct input into Government policy from the wide range of groups representing people living with disadvantage.

Recommendation 20: Notwithstanding the ACT Government's stance that the level of public housing is a disadvantage to the ACT economy, that it recognise the need for secure, affordably, flexible and appropriate housing for people living with disadvantage by expanding the public housing stock.

Recommendation 21: That community housing groups be encouraged to expand their activities to meet the need for particular cohorts within the ACT for alternative housing models.

Recommendation 22: That the Government outline its long term plans to meet the needs of an ageing population in terms of accommodation, adaptable housing, transport, HACC and SAAP services, and issues of access to affordable health care.

Recommendation 23: That the ACT Government support the current wage case for childcare workers, and that the Government explore all possible avenues to expand child care services in the ACT.

Recommendation 24: That the Government work with services providers in the community sector on providing targeted health services to address area of particular need, including young people, young people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, people with drug dependency and people in older age groups.

Recommendation 25: That the recommendations of the Commissioner for Community and Health Service complaints regarding accommodation options for people with a mental illness be implemented as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 26: That the other recommendations of the Community and Health Service Complaints Commissioner that have been adopted be outlined in the Budget, with indications of how the recommendations will be met by the Mental Health Action Plan.

Recommendation 27: That sufficient funds be appropriated to ensure the Mental Health Action Plan can achieve its goals and to provide for better support for people living with mental illness.

Recommendation 28: That specific services be developed to ensure people with a dual diagnosis receive holistic services that meet their needs.

Recommendation 29: That forensic mental health services be established as a matter of priority in conjunction with the new ACT Remand Centre.

Recommendation 30: That sufficient additional funds be provided to ensure that the needs already identified in the disability reform process are met without disadvantaging other areas of service delivery.

Recommendation 31: That the Government expedite the announced reforms to the Taxi Transport Scheme.

Recommendation 32: That the Government provide funds to allow for accessibility upgrades of all Government owned and community-leased premises.

Recommendation 33: That the ACT Government ensure that funds are available to meet SACS Award increase.

Recommendation 34: That the ACT Government take note of, and implement, the recommendations of the various reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage in the ACT, and further consult with local service providers to identify and fund services to fill gaps in service.

Recommendation 35: That the ACT Government include funds for site location and design for the proposed new remand centre in the 2003-04 Budget.

Recommendation 36: That the Gambling and Racing Commission produce an analysis of the two Australian Institute of Gambling Research papers on ACT gambling, including policy and program responses to overcome problem gambling in Canberra.

Recommendation 37: That the ACT Government favourably consider funding requests from the Youth Coalition of the ACT for urgently needed services for

young people, and that the Government consider this expenditure an investment in the future of these important members of our community.

Recommendation 38: That the ACT Government increase its investment in human services in the ACT, in recognition of the economic and community benefits of such investments.

Recommendation 39: That the Government provide funds to compensate community organisations and their members for their time and effort in participating in Government consultation processes. The quantum of such compensation and claimable items should be discussed with one of the more formal groups, such as the Disability Advisory Council, then adapted to cover other community sector organisations.

Recommendation 40: That the ACT Government provide commitments in the 2003-04 Budget for funding priorities for each of the above reviews, consultations, policy development exercises and regulatory reviews.

Recommendation 41: That the ACT Government not use any deficit in the 2003-04 Budget as a rationale to introduce severe cuts in the 2004-05 Budget for the sake of going to an election with a paper surplus.

Recommendation 42: That all monies raised to ensure timely and efficient recovery from the ACT fires be separately accounted for in their own statement.

Recommendation 43: That once insurance compensation payouts begin to flow to the ACT, this money be applied to community capacity building in recognition of the long-term effects of the fires on the wider ACT population.

Recommendation 44: That all new programs and funding initiatives are explained in terms of their funding sources, including any programs that have been wound-back, suffered reduced funding or abolished to pay for budget initiatives.

Recommendation 45: That the analysis begun in 2000 by the ACT Treasury on the equity of ACT revenue raising measures be continued and that such analysis be presented on the ACT Government website.

Recommendation 46: That the ACT Government explore the potential for sustainability taxation measures to be introduced in the ACT.

Recommendation 47: That the ACT Government investigate the phased introduction of parking space levies, along similar lines to the New South Wales levy.

Recommendation 48: That the ACT Government look at applying land tax to all ACT residential properties, using a multiple of the average AUV for the whole of the ACT as a base.

Recommendation 49: That the 18 month old concessions review be processed and finalised with the input of the Joint Community Sector Government Reference Group.

Recommendation 50: That a statement of the costs incurred through concessions and rebates be included as part of the ACT's Budget.

Recommendation 51: That the payroll tax exemption threshold be set at a lower level, matching that of New South Wales and that the Government investigate the use of a sliding scale of payroll tax rates.

Recommendation 52: That all business assistance measures be identified in the budget, and that plain English explanations of the quantum and expected benefits be provided. Annual reports should also provide analysis and reporting of the outcomes of such assistance.

Recommendation 53: That the Government use business assistance funds for the development of a new, centrally located and multi-function convention centre that facilitates community as well as private sector use.

THEME 1:

Responding to need after the January ACT fires

THEME 1: RESPONDING TO NEED AFTER THE JANUARY ACT FIRES

The physical, social and psychological effects of the January ACT fires will be long felt in the community as it rebuilds and re-establishes infrastructure and social capital.

ACTCOSS sees the outpouring of community spirit and strength of response as a positive demonstration of the commitment of Australians to a fair and inclusive society. The continued support and response to the needs of those who were most directly affected by this emergency will be a credit to the ACT community.

Some of property owners who lost their homes are now taking advantage of an opportunity that has been presented to them and will be redesigning their houses and possibly making changes in their lifestyles. ACTCOSS believes that this is also a good time to focus on strengthening the community sector and providing it with the resources to upgrade and improve its services.

There are many high profile areas that will attract funding to compensate them for the outlays incurred as a result of the ACT fires. ACT Emergency Services, the Rural Fire Services, the evacuation centres and the recovery centre. There will also be payments to households and businesses and the Task Force secretariat, among many others. These are necessary and deserved payments, however most of this financial outlay should be recouped through Federal Disaster Relief Funding. The Territory Government's commitment to rebuilding the communities affected by the fires, while harder to quantify for the purposes of disaster relief, is just as important for the Territory's long term recovery.

The ACT community sector was also in the forefront of the response to the January fires and met a range of challenges. The Living on the Edge survey of community services had been completed the week before the ACT fires, and showed that many services in the ACT were already stretched and that an increasing number of clients were being turned away from services already at capacity. Even before the fires, services adopted a number of strategies to cope with the shortfall, including greater targeting of services, increased referrals to other agencies, the creation or extension of waiting lists, using up financial resources, increased use of volunteers and seeking additional funding from Government or the business sector. The fact that so many services were able to meet the increased workload caused by the fires while resources were so stretched was due to the commitment of those who work in the sector and their supporters in the wider community.

The following is a short summary of some of the problems faced by the community sector in the immediate aftermath of the January alert.

DIRECT EFFECTS

- **Galilee Day Program** in Kambah lost its main school building, including education resources, client records, and curriculum. They also lost a great deal of equipment, their IT resource room, their craft resource room, and

their staff room and staff resources. Galilee also lost its replacement computers from its temporary accommodation at Pearce a few weeks after the fire.

- **Fusion** at Youth Haven lost all of its buildings and resources. This included two houses for homeless youth and the Director's house and office.
- **Grant Cameron Community Centre at Holder:** While the Centre was not lost, it was rendered uninhabitable by the fires, and remedial work took three weeks to complete.

Several organisations housed in the Grant Cameron Community Centre made alternative arrangements until power and water were restored to the building. Safety checks and cleaning had to be completed before organisations could return to the premises. Most organisations continued providing client services as usual. However, these organisations had limited access to telephone lines, often working with just one mobile phone line, and were under enormous pressure.

A lack of access to normal office facilities including email, internet and computer networking facilities meant that organisations had to delay completion of some administration and management activities.

Other organisations within the Centre were completely unable to provide services during the time that the Centre was closed.

Several community organisations were relocated with generous assistance from other members of the community, including the business sector. These include:

- Home Help, Handy Help, FaBRiC and the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association (all from Grant Cameron Centre) were very generously taken in by Finer Details Computing in Fyshwick.
- Many individual community members took diverted phone calls across a wide range of organisations.
- Many community organisations were temporarily relocated to private homes.

HUMAN RESOURCE EFFECTS

Home and Community Care (HACC) service providers reported that many had clients evacuated, which caused a lot of distress. In some areas clients were talking of moving to get away from any future fire threat. The fires left many elderly and frail people feeling vulnerable and frightened.

The Red Cross' home alarm service advised that their alarms were affected by the power cuts, which meant that they had to put in extra staff hours checking many false alarms. The service also had to continually replace batteries for clients experiencing power cuts.

Most services have reported that, as a minimum, they were facing increased time with clients who felt distressed and vulnerable.

Staff in many agencies have faced an increased level of anxiety among their clients because of changes caused by the fires in areas such as housing. For example, many people who were on transfer lists for ACT Housing properties are now facing delays in their transfers. While there is a level of understanding of the crisis, those people who had been assessed as having an urgent need for relocation are now frustrated at the possibility of delay. ACTCOSS recognises that this is not the case for all transfers, and that some transfers are still going ahead despite the problems caused by re-housing more than 80 households after the fires. However, the frustration caused by the delays and increased uncertainty is impacting on community service providers.

Community services in all areas reported that staff directly affected by the fires continued to work to assist clients, despite their own needs. Some staff have since had to take time off to organise their own families and see to their own needs, further impacting on services. At a time when organisations expected to have all regular staff on hand to deal with ordinary demand, they have reduced staff and facilities to meet increased demands.

The staffing issues for most services were also exacerbated by the fact that the fires caused increased demand a time when most services were reduced for the holiday break and many staff were on leave. Many returned voluntarily once they were made aware of the fires, and there were many instances within the public, not for profit and for profit sectors where staff who weren't on call turned up for work to assist with meeting the emergency. We are all proud of the efforts of the people who work in community services, regardless of their employers, in assisting those in need during this crisis.

ACTCOSS is therefore asking the ACT Government to ensure that the increased needs of the community sector are not overlooked in the rebuilding process. While some measure of assistance has been provided to compensate organisations who were directly affected by the fires, this does not take into account the services that were not directly affected, but whose workloads were increased as they rose to the challenge of providing extra services and dealing with new clients at a time of great community anguish. ACTCOSS understands that community service organisations that had an increase in workload as a result of the fires have access to a top-up payment to ensure they are able to meet the costs of that commitment. Applying for these funds should not be an added impost.

Recommendation 1: That organisations who occupy the Grant Cameron Centre be given a one month waiver of their rent to help compensate for the additional costs of providing services while unable to occupy their offices.

Recommendation 2: That community organisations applying for top up funding be given assistance to help quantify, where possible, the added burden, and that there be provision of a general grant for organisations who are meeting additional demand from within current resources. The funds application process should also be simplified to ensure the

application process itself does not cause further hardship for affected organisations.

The Council echoes the sentiments of ACTCOSS' many member organisations that were assisted after being directly affected by the fires in thanking the Government for its efforts to re-establish services as soon as possible. These individuals' and organisations' experiences need to be recorded and made available to the process of updating the ACT's emergency response plan. This needs to occur as soon as possible after the emergency, but after the services have been re-established. ACTCOSS would like to see support for those who were directly affected to be provided with funded time off to debrief and provide some input into the development of the updated emergency response plan.

Recommendation 3: That part of the ACT Community Fund fire emergency proceeds be made available to organisations directly and indirectly affected by the fires to allow critical incident debriefing and ongoing counselling support for an appropriate period of time.

Recommendation 4: That funding be provided to allow staff from agencies that responded to calls for assistance after the ACT fires to participate in processes leading to the development of an updated disaster management plan.

Funding the recovery process has become a major issue for the ACT Government, with indications that there will be a combination of measures to overcome the financial costs. ACTCOSS asks that the Government ensure that it sets out its recovery program in very clear terms so that the whole community can understand the measures being taken.

This may include a separate budget statement, along the lines of previous year's women's, indigenous and social capital budget statements, aggregating all the measures that will be taken up to meet the costs of the fires and its aftermath.

Recommendation 5: That a separate Budget document be prepared that provides an open and honest financial and qualitative explanation of the measures being taken to meet the cost of the fires. This should include reference to Appropriation Bill No. 2002-2003 (No 2) and the time frame within which the costs will be met. The document should be in cash accounting terms.

Finally, ACTCOSS believes that the crisis caused by the fires should not be met by a withdrawal and contraction of services within the community sector. As outlined under theme 2 of ACTCOSS' submission, the community services sector in Canberra is an important part of the economic fabric of Canberra. Services have already suffered cuts in real terms through a reduction in indexation after the 2002-03 Budget. This is compounded by the awarding of an increase in wage rates at the lower end of the Social and Community Services (SACS) award pay scales. This will be discussed under Theme 2: Community Sector Viability.

THEME 2

Community Sector Viability

THEME 2: COMMUNITY SECTOR VIABILITY

In late 2002, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), in conjunction with the state and territory Councils conducted the Australians Living on the Edge Survey (ACT and national findings on ACTCOSS website at: www.actcoss.org.au). This survey analysed the demand on services, mostly in the not-for-profit area, for the year ended 30 June 2002.

Unsurprisingly for ACTCOSS, Canberra services reported an increase in demand as well as an increase in the number of people who could not be assisted. Many factors contributed, including rising costs and the increased complexity of services needed by clients.

Most disturbingly, 32 per cent of respondents expected to be unable to meet anticipated increases in demand over the next 12 months.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the ACT Chief Minister's Department (CMD) have found even more distressing figures on unmet need.

"Based on the SAAP [Supported Accommodation Assistance Program] Unmet Demand Collection, an estimated average of 20 clients and 13 accompanying children seeking accommodation were turned away each day, including 14 clients and 8 accompanying children who were seeking immediate accommodation."
(AIHW/CMD, 2003. p. xiii)

Of concern to ACTCOSS is that fact that Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in its *Selected Social and Housing Characteristics* publication covering the ACT (ABS Cat. 2015.8), has recorded an increase in the number of lone person and single parent households in the ACT. Both single person and lone parent households were identified by the ACT Poverty Task Group's final report as being most at risk of poverty, making this increase a cause for concern.

The age profile of the ACT has also changed, with an increase in the median age and a rise in the number of people over 65 corresponding to a similar drop in our 0-14 cohort.

In addition, recent statistics on home affordability have seen Canberra fall in the rankings to make home ownership unachievable for many residents. Canberra also has the distinction of having some of the least affordable rental accommodation in the country, closely following rentals for the Sydney metropolitan area.

The impact of these changing factors on the community sector is an increase in demand for services from the Government and non-government service providers.

VALUE OF SECTOR TO ECONOMY

In 1999, a joint ACOSS/state and territory Councils of Social Service research paper investigated the contribution of the community services sector to the Federal, state and territory economies. The *Common Cause* publication pointed out that investment in human services through the non-profit community welfare sector provides:

- Services that are used by the majority of the community at some point in their lives;
- Support for individuals and families that helps strengthen communities, building cohesion, equity, and providing positive social change;
- Mobilisation of voluntary effort, community networks and participation in philanthropy; and
- One of the central mechanisms by which social capital is built, and supportive and connected communities are established and maintained.

ACTCOSS has revisited and expanded on this research during 2002-03 debunking the popular belief that funding the provision of services by the non-government community sector is foregone expenditure. Instead, such expenditure promotes economic development by creating a high number of jobs per dollar spent, directly contributing industry value added and stimulating value added in the economy as a whole, promoting local employment beyond the sector through consumption effects, providing avenues for volunteer work, and facilitating the economic participation of people living in disadvantage who otherwise have limited access to the labour market. (ACTCOSS Feb 03)

The community sector directly contributes employment and industry value added to the ACT economy, and stimulates jobs and value added in the economy as a whole. ACTCOSS calculations using ABS data show that the annual value added by the community service industries in the ACT can be estimated at \$149.1million, and that the sector directly employs around 6,800 people.

National-level industry multipliers show that spending on community services produces beneficial economy-wide effects in value-added and employment (Michael Carman, 'Multiplying Benefits: The Economic Impact of Public Spending'). This means, for example, that a dollar spent on helping someone find accommodation has a larger flow-on effect in the economy, adding more value and creating more jobs than a dollar spent on forestry and logging.

The Input-Output model maintained by the Economic Analysis section of the ACT Treasury shows that of 34 industry sectors the Welfare sector has the highest multiplier effect in terms of ACT industry value added (ACT Treasury, 1997-1998 Input Output Tables).¹ One million dollars worth of extra output in the Welfare sector is projected by this model to produce an increase of \$1.1m to \$1.2m in gross territory product.² The Welfare sector is ranked 6th out of 34 industry sectors for its employment generating capacity. An increase in output of \$1m is projected to create an extra ten jobs directly and cause a flow on effect in which a further seven jobs are created in other industry sectors.

¹ In this model the 'Welfare' category comprises Community Services (ANZSIC 87) and Other Services (ANZSIC 96)

² This is a Type II value-added multiplier of 1.855.

Non-government organisations delivering community services utilise a great deal of labour for every unit of expenditure. For every \$1m spent on community services in the not-for-profit sector, 30.7 people are employed (ABS, *Community Services*, Cat. No. 8690.0, Table 2.1). This compares with 17.2 people employed for every \$1m spent in the government sector. Some, but not all, of this difference might be attributed to differences in labour costs. The community sector also adds productivity by utilising volunteer labour.

Investment in the community sector therefore has two key economic benefits:

1. increasing the economic independence and potential productivity of Canberrans living with disadvantage; and
2. providing higher employment multipliers than most other industries.

This, in ACTCOSS's view, is clearly a very productive and appropriate use of public funds, and meets many of the criteria espoused for various forms of business assistance.

Community services facilitate the economic participation of people who otherwise have limited access to the labour market. By providing services such as independent living support, information and referral, and advocacy, the community sector enables people to contribute their skills and abilities to the ACT economy. This increases the effectiveness and productivity of the labour market.

Importantly, the type of economic development promoted by the community services is that which provides diverse and accessible opportunities for participation and is oriented to social and personal well-being. In developing policies that seek to promote economic growth in the ACT, the ACT Government has a responsibility to support industries that offer broad social benefits. The community services sector is a good example of such an industry.

COST OF PROVIDING THE SERVICE BY THE GOVERNMENT IF THE COMMUNITY SECTOR BEGINS FAILING

If the viability of the community sector is not supported, its capacity to provide services is undermined. The withdrawal of services not only has immediate implications for service users, but also entails serious and compounding costs for the ACT Government.

On a basic level, Government provision of community services is likely to be more costly and, possibly, less effective than provision by the non-government community sector. The non-government community sector is widely understood to offer cost-effective options for the provision of community services. In particular, community sector organisations have been noted for their capacity to effectively target programs, respond quickly to changing need, their thorough understanding of community needs, their access to volunteer effort, their ability to operate with lower overheads, and the efficiencies that result from their small management infrastructures (NSW Council of Social Service, *Submission to the NSW Health Council – NGO Program*, September 1999; Victoria's Auditor

General, *Performance Audit Report to Parliament on Grants and Subsidies to Non-government Organisations*, March 1994, Part 2.)

Australia-wide ABS data shows that for every dollar spent on community service provision the not-for-profit sector attained output measures that were between 10% and 400% higher than the government sector in all but one of the 15 activities for which reliable data is available (ABS, *Community Services*, Tables 2.2, 2.4). On average, the not-for-profit sector achieved efficiency measures that were 2.4 times higher than those achieved in the government sector. Notwithstanding reasonable reservations about the usefulness of such efficiency measures, these results clearly show that the community sector provides services for more people for every dollar spent than do government agencies.

However, the 'lean' nature of community organisations means that there is limited scope for administrative savings. Already, many organisations are forced to make difficult trade-offs regarding operational issues, including trade-offs between staff pay and conditions, and service provision.

It is also important to note that the withdrawal of essential community services and supports mean that costs are simply shifted to elsewhere in the ACT budget, often appearing as increased demand for emergency financial, housing and food assistance. If threats to the viability of non-government community services are such that emergency and ongoing support cannot be provided, the Government will be forced to pick up the costs. These costs would appear across all of the Government's portfolio areas, and would be especially felt in the areas of health and criminal justice and corrections. The need for community services does not disappear when services are withdrawn; instead, the need and associated costs appear elsewhere. Furthermore, the costs of responding to acute needs and personal crises are often considerable.

PRESSURES FACING THE ACT COMMUNITY SECTOR

Social and Community Sector (SACS) Award increases

In 2001, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) granted a pay rise for workers under the SACS award. The impact of this was recognised, and \$4.1 million was allocated with bipartisan support to meet the immediate shortfall that this unforeseen rise would cost the community sector.

In mid-2002, the AIRC made a further determination that had the immediate effect of increasing the wage rates for people employed on grade 1-4 wage rates. While there has been a freeze on wages in the band 5-8 range, the decision has increased pressure on the sector.

To remain sustainable, the community sector needs increased Government funding to:

- o Fund the increased rates of pay for SACS 1-4 in line with the AIRC decision as a matter of urgency. The anticipated cost of funding the wage increase in band 1-4 SACS award rates is \$1.5million per annum.

- Provide funding of non-standard work hours for relevant organisations. Providing services to many clients groups necessitates non-standard hours of operation. However, this is not always reflected in contract pricing for staff employed under awards. This is particularly important in early intervention services for young people.
- Ensure that funding for SACS 5-8 does not decrease in line with recent AIRC decisions. While a freeze has been put on the relevant wage rates, the sector will suffer if there is no career and wage growth in these wage bands. Much of the work done by people employed in these classifications is concerned with compliance, administration and management functions. Strict adherence to a wage freeze would be detrimental to the sector's ability to meet its contractual and employee obligations.
- Provide for continued wage increases for SACS 5-8. Strict compliance with the wage freeze would lead to an increased turnover of staff in the sector, which would deplete corporate knowledge and experience at a time when the community sector is facing increased demand.

Recommendation 6: That the ACT Government provide an injection of \$2.5million to allow for recurrent costs to the community sector of the SACS award decisions of the AIRC in 2001-02.³

Recommendation 7: That the ACT Government provide funds to allow for growth in the wage and salary levels of people employed under the higher SACS Award grades.

Another important and related sustainability issue for community organisations and service providers is the cost of compliance with increasingly complex and legalistic contract and licencing requirements. ACTCOSS also believes that the management of volunteers is under-resourced.

Some of these costs relate directly to working conditions, such as Occupational Health and Safety and training. Other costs are generated by the need to collect data and provide compliance reports, including the need to upgrade employee skills to comply with these requests, as well as providing the infrastructure to assemble the data and report to funding bodies. This has been evidenced in the HACC sector over recent years as the Minimum Data Set collection and analysis has been implemented. ACTCOSS understands such data collection is to become more widespread for ACT community service organisations.

ACTCOSS believes that the costs of meeting compliance standards, providing adequate data and meeting good practice employment standards should be included in all contract negotiations, and assistance given to organisations that need to develop the necessary skills base.

Recommendation 8: That the funding formula for service providers in the community sector be changed to ensure the costs of training, compliance, data collection and volunteer management are reflected in the funding amount. Where necessary, the ACT Government should

³ Costing includes \$1.5 million for band 1-4 SACS plus \$1 million for higher award and non-standard hours payments.

provide community organisations with assistance to adequately cost these imposts during contract negotiations.

Recommendation 9: That the ACT Government facilitate and fund an online training portal that would provide community organisations with free or low cost training in contract compliance, business regulation and other related topics.

Indexation

In his Budget press release in 2002-03, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope stated that:

"This budget restores and enhances the basic services Canberrans want their Government to provide...In particular it supports our education and health systems, and assists those people in greatest need." (Press Release: 2002-03 ACT Budget: Delivering on our commitments and progressing our vision")

The ACT community sector took heart from the announcements of Budget night believing that, at the very least, there would be support for the sector to meet its growing needs.

This confidence was undermined when the funding round was announced, and many organisations found that their indexation amount was less than the recognised rate of inflation. Some groups received the full 2.5% inflation rate, while some were only provided with a 1.1% (Consumer Price Index) CPI increase.

The 'salami slicing' of community service providers' funding has had a profound effect across the sector, compounded by the problems of meeting wages increases (as per the SACS award increase) from reduced funding in real terms.

ACTCOSS, on behalf of its membership and its associates in the community services sector, is asking that that reduction be reversed, and that community organisations that were not fully compensated for CPI increases in 2002-03 be provided with catch-up funding in 2003-04.

Recommendation 10: That Government departments be provided with funds to allow them to compensate community organisations who received less than full indexation in their 2002-03 funding.

Recommendation 11: That, working in the spirit of the Compact, a mutually agreed approach to indexation be used consistently. This mutually agreed approach should appropriately reflect the annual increases in the cost of delivering services, and would ensure all Government departments are meeting their contractual obligations on indexing under the standard contract.

Insurance costs

The ACT Government has been resolute in its pursuit of relief for small community organisations from onerous costs of mandatory public liability insurance. These measures have gone some way to ensuring many smaller organisations have not been forced to close their doors.

However, insurance continues to be a major cause for concern in the community sector, as shown in the Australians Living on the Edge survey. Despite the fact that the sector has a good insurance claims record (ACOSS 2003, Canberra data, page 15), organisations still face increases in their insurance. In the ACT, there was an 18% average increase in insurance premiums, rising from \$1.32million in 2001-02 to \$1.56million in 2002-03.

This is partly due to:

1. Insurance companies increasing premiums for all forms of insurance;
2. Some very high risk organisations not being able to gain assistance from the ACT Government scheme; and
3. Organisations who receive the majority of their funding from either charitable or federal sources gaining little or no relief from ACT Government assistance measures.

Recommendation 12: That the ACT Government go further in its efforts on behalf of the community sector to support the provision of affordable access to insurance by broadening the definition of organisations that are eligible for the ACT government-negotiated scheme and providing funding for risk-management and reduction services to the community services sector.

Recommendation 13: That the ACT Government provide for the costs of insurance when developing its funding guidelines for the community sector.

Community Sector Accommodation

ACTCOSS has been lobbying for some time for a more pro-active asset management policy for Government premises used by community organisations. The Council was pleased that the Government decided early in its first term to release the Conroy Report on community sector accommodation in the inner North and Civic in 2002. That report has highlighted many of the common problems experienced by community groups who are housed in Government buildings.

ACTCOSS appreciates that the provision of accommodation can be seen as a subsidy to some groups. However, as detailed in the Conroy report, it can be a drain on resources if there is insufficient maintenance, and if the premises are not adequate to the task.

ACTCOSS is encouraging the Government in its spatial planning exercise to look at the provision of accommodation to community groups as an investment in social capital and community capacity building. ACTCOSS argues that, on an economic basis, the failure to provide suitable, well maintained accommodation is a drain on Government resources, as community groups struggle to ensure they have safe and useable accommodation. Using resources to obtain emergency plumbing or electrical work, provide heating and cooling, or remedy unsafe access depletes the resources available for core business.

The Council also takes issue with the past policy of ware-housing built assets by leasing them to community groups, with the intention of allowing them to run down until they achieve redevelopment potential. All ACT Government assets under accrual accounting have a value, and ACTCOSS again makes the point that not ensuring that maintenance and refurbishment are factored into departmental budgets means that the capital works budget is constantly being diverted from building the ACT's asset base to crisis management.

Recommendation 14: That the ACT Government set out clear policies and priorities for the maintenance and upgrading of its built assets, currently leased to community organisations to ensure that the buildings reach, and are maintained at, an appropriate standard.

The Conroy report found that there was a degree of sub-leasing of community space within the sector that was not factored into the head lease agreement. Such administrative issues are difficult to deal with when leasing and administration are spread across the ACT public sector.

Recommendation 15: That the ACT Government vest the administration and oversight of the leasing and maintenance of Government buildings that are leased to the community sector in a centralised agency.

Information Technology (IT) access

The ACT Government provided a much needed boost for the ACT public sector in 2002-03 by providing \$10.7million over four years to Canberra Connect to enhance service delivery. The Canberra Connect service has shown its merit in the recent fire emergency and its enhancement will assist in the community sector's work.

Capital funding of \$7.8million and recurrent funding of \$6.19million over four years was also provided to upgrade human resource efficiency and effectiveness, and \$5.28million of capital, and \$1.6million of recurrent funding was provided to upgrade Government financial systems.

ACTCOSS believes that recognition of the costs of administration and service provision in the public sector should be followed this year with recognition of the needs of the community sector.

As recognised in the work of the Digital Divide task force, community sector IT access is limited. As outlined earlier, compliance with Government and other regulatory requirements is costly and time consuming. Many community groups

cannot afford to upgrade their IT infrastructure to support the changes required of their service contracts, for example, in the area of data collection. The lack of appropriate software, hardware and training can drain resources away from a community organisations core business.

ACTCOSS has also been promoting the use of compliance data by organisations as a management tool. Much of the feedback received indicates that a lack of funds to invest in upgrading IT capacity limits the ability of these organisations to undertake this type of business development.

Recommendation 16: That the Government provide funds for an upgrade of community organisations' IT infrastructure to enable the community sector to capitalise on the opportunities presented by new software applications, and to better integrate with the IT infrastructure of the public sector.

Many community organisations have historically provided IT access for their client groups in recognition that these people have no other appropriate access. Such groups include people who are homeless, people on low incomes (particularly young people) and people with disabilities. Community organisations often use technology two or three generations old, their internet access is unreliable and narrow band, and expertise is minimal. Due to the poor state of IT in the community sector many of these client groups do not gain the advantage they could from the access that is provided.

Recommendation 17: That the funding being made available through the Digital Divide Reference Group be focused on development of Community IT access centres, which would have the dual benefit of supporting disadvantaged client groups and supporting community organizations who could make the service available to their clients via a modest fee-for-service arrangement.

Community Sector participation in consultations and forums

This issue is also addressed in Theme 4: Responding to changes identified by Government inquiries, policies and reforms.

The ACT community services sector employs an estimated 7,000 Canberrans in providing services to people who need assistance to undertake everyday activities. Many of these services are provided by not-for-profit groups who manage to operate on a low budget to ensure that most of their funding goes directly into service provision.

This often means that there is no capacity within an organisation to participate in the wider planning processes of government, where decisions about spending priorities are made. This is particularly so in smaller advocacy organisations, or those established by consumers and their representatives.

ACTCOSS believes that consumer consultation should be at the core of Government decision-making. The ACT Government has restated its commitment

to evidence-based policy formulation in its budget consultation documents, a sentiment that ACTCOSS wholly supports.

The problem has been that often those people who should be consulted are not. This can be because there is simply no-one in a small organisation with the time to participate in the process. In larger organisations the situation can be similar; the pressures of the core business do not allow for time to analyse and reflect the work of the organisation in a larger forum.

ACTCOSS facilitates a number of forums to ensure that it has appropriate information in its dealings with the Government, the Assembly, the business sector and Government departments. Most of these forums are attended by people on their own time and without recompense. While this may be an appropriate model for a community peak group, ACTCOSS believes that organisations, consumers and carers should be provided with the resources necessary to allow them to participate in a wide variety of consultation forums.

ACTCOSS believes that taking time out to participate in, and add value to, a community consultation process should not be at the expense of the individual or organisation. This does not mean that a financial reward is sought for every public meeting, but that consultations that require a significant workload to prepare reports, papers or oral submissions should be compensated. There should also be some recompense for people who accept invitations to attend meetings that go over an hour.

Recommendation 18: That the Government recognise the contribution of individuals and community organisations who participate in its major consultation activities. (See Recommendation 39 : page 40)

ACTCOSS recognises that the Government gains a benefit from the input provided by consumer representative organisations. The contribution of the sector is evident from the range of reviews, consultations and inquiries that have taken place in the past 18 months (some of which are detailed in Theme 4). Unfortunately consumer-based representative organisations in the ACT operate either solely or mainly on the voluntary efforts of their community of interest. These organisations need resources to support their continued involvement in Government processes, allowing them to draw on their wider pool of members.

Recommendation 19: That the ACT Government substantially increase the funding to consumer-based representative organisations with a view to obtaining high quality, direct input into Government policy from the wide range of groups representing people living with disadvantage.

THEME 3

Shortages in basic human services

THEME 3: SHORTAGES IN BASIC HUMAN SERVICES

A strong community provides its members with opportunities to contribute to, and benefit from, community life. This includes the ability to undertake paid or unpaid work, negotiate essential personal services such as medical appointments, and attend to their affairs.

Support for these activities becomes a major issue when addressing the participation needs of people with a disability, people who are infirm, people who have mental health problems, and those with carer responsibilities, whether as a parent or other carer.

ACTCOSS notes that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has found the ACT spends less on services in the disability sector than may be anticipated by other economic data.

“Expenditure on accommodation support services and community access services (expressed as dollars per potential population in need) was lower in the ACT than nationally” (AIHW/CMD, 2003, p. xii)

This confirms wider sector experience that many human services are under-resourced or unavailable for many members of the community, whether they are in the paid workforce or on income support. ACTCOSS has identified the following areas of particular concern.

HOUSING –

Human resource development is one of the major contributors to growth in modern economies. However human capital cannot be developed unless it is adequately housed. Accommodation insecurity has proved to be one of the major factors in Canberra’s housing crisis, as outlined in both the Affordable Housing Task Force final report, and (prepared by the former Department of Education and Community Services) the research paper on homelessness.

The Council congratulates the ACT Government for recognising the fundamental need for secure housing for people living with disadvantage by reintroducing security of tenure for public housing tenants.

ACTCOSS believes that addressing homelessness, housing insecurity and affordability are a major task for the ACT Government at this time. These tasks cut across portfolio boundaries because housing stress is encountered by families, people on low incomes, people with mental illness, older Canberrans, children, people experiencing employment difficulties, students, people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, people who have been in custody, people from a non-English speaking background and those with drug-related problems.

The AIHW/CMD report referred to earlier also found that housing was a major human services issue:

"Many residents are unable to obtain housing that meets their needs because of the limited availability of safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing, whether in private markets or as 'social housing'." (p. xii)

"In 1999, across all tenure types, there were 8,400 low-income households in the ACT paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs." (p. xii)

"Canberra has experienced the largest relative rent rises in Australia for flats/units." (p. xii)

Many of the problems with affordability are compounded by the costs of heating and cooling Canberra's older housing stock. This is a major expenditure for all residents, but impacts the most on those living with disadvantage who are unable to access secure, affordable housing.

While the Government is keen to expand the non-public housing sectors, ACTCOSS believes that there is still need for growth in public housing in the ACT to meet demand. There is also a need to expand the community housing stock to provide the widest range of low-cost housing to meet the needs of a changing demographic base.

Recommendation 20: Notwithstanding the ACT Government's stance that the level of public housing is a disadvantage to the ACT economy, that it recognise the need for secure, affordably, flexible and appropriate housing for people living with disadvantage by expanding the public housing stock.

Recommendation 21: That community housing groups be encouraged to expand their activities to meet the needs of particular cohorts within the ACT for alternative housing models.

AGED CARE SERVICES –

Both ABS and ACT Government demographic projections show the proportion of ACT residents in the over-60 cohort is growing. The ACT is also one of the jurisdictions facing the problem of an aging population that has few social supports, due to workforce mobility and other factors. Added to this is the ACT's role as a regional hub, servicing the south-east region and coastal areas for medical and other age-related services.

One of the main areas of concern among people reaching retirement age is housing. This is an issue both for the increasing number of people who choose to continue working past normal retirement age and for those who can no longer work.

There is a reasonable expectation that the amount of adaptable housing in the ACT accommodation market will need to increase as more people in independent housing experience the disabilities associated with ageing. The problem will also

lead to an increased call for adaptable public housing, given the realities of private rental accommodation in Canberra.

Location is also an issue in Canberra, with people wanting to be closer to the services they need as they grow older. At present there is little incentive in the way of rebates and concessions to encourage older people to relocate to new, more appropriate homes as their needs change. This includes the proposed rates regime, which would see rates only increase above CPI increments when a property is sold. Such a change is at risk of leaving people trapped in unsuitable accommodation due to the costs associated with moving.

There is also a need for an increased level of residential care and supported accommodation specifically for people who are frail and ageing.

Closely tied to the issue of accommodation is that of transport. While an aging population will produce an increase in older car drivers, flexible alternatives need to be found for the anticipated increase in the number of older Canberrans whose health, eyesight or other problem prevents them from driving. This includes expansion of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, continued improvement in access on ACTION buses, improved access from bus stops and interchanges to nearby facilities and expanded community transport options.

ACTCOSS understands the ACT Government is engaging in talks with the states and Commonwealth on ways to overcome the withdrawal of bulk-billing by doctors. The Council encourages the Government in this move, but also asks that all local effort possible be made to ensure that medical services for people in the older age cohorts are extended and supported.

There is also a need for combined and individual Government action on the level of Home and Community Care (HACC) services available in Canberra. At present, access to HACC services is restricted with providers unable to meet demand.

In SAAP programs, as in aged care services, people with high and complex needs are attracting all the spending. Therefore people needing a short sharp intervention are getting assistance, but people with more long-term, low level demands are missing out.

Recommendation 22: That the Government outline its long term plans to meet the needs of an ageing population in terms of accommodation, adaptable housing, transport, HACC and SAAP services, and issues of access to affordable health care.

CHILDCARE –

The demand for child care services has been increasing in Canberra as many families find they need two incomes to provide for their families. Demand has not only grown for long-day care and family-based services, but for occasional care and after school services as well.

The recently announced wage push for childcare workers has highlighted the problem of skilled workers leaving a growing industry because the returns do not match those of lower skilled, less responsible positions. It is important that the

ACT Government recognise the professionalism of child care workers, and the potential the industry has to generate employment, as well as providing for re-entry to the workforce by women.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that child care services are in some instances being used as defacto respite care for children with disabilities. ACTCOSS believes that childcare must be appropriate to meet the needs of children, and not become a drain on the resources of services with inclusive practices. Services must be fully funded to deliver the programs they contract for, including additional support to ensure programs for children with disabilities meet their goals of inclusion and development.

Recommendation 23: That the ACT Government support the current wage case for childcare workers, and that the Government explore all possible avenues to expand child care services in the ACT.

MEDICAL SERVICES –

As previously stated, ACTCOSS congratulates the ACT Government for its efforts to shore up the Medicare system and to find a way to restore bulk-billing in the ACT. ACTCOSS is also supportive of the Government's efforts to look at health as a positive value in the community. For example, the Healthy Communities initiatives are among the programs that complement the acute and critical care services delivered in the health system.

ACTCOSS believes that the delivery of medical services by the community sector in the ACT fulfils an important role in reducing demand on critical-level services and as such, deserves Government support.

In the areas of drug and youth-specific services in particular, the ACT has developed ground-breaking services that are meeting needs in the most appropriate way.

ACTCOSS would like to see more Government support for the delivery of low cost medical services in the community, as part of an overall strategy recognising the inter-relatedness of health and community wellbeing. In particular, locally based, culturally appropriate health services are needed to address disadvantage in an holistic way.

Recommendation 24: That the Government work with services providers in the community sector on providing targeted health services to address area of particular need, including young people, young people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, people with drug dependency and people in older age groups.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES –

Developments in diagnosis, an ageing population, and some emerging drug trends all point to an increasing awareness of, and need for mental health

services in the ACT community. This includes specific services to meet the needs of people who have a dual diagnosis.

The ACT Government has been supporting the work of ACTCOSS in drawing together organisations working in the mental health field to form a Mental Health Peak, to facilitate communication and coordination in the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) sector. This work needs continued active support from the Government.

ACTCOSS is pleased that the ACT Government has been actively working towards a mental health strategy and action plan. These documents now need Government funding to ensure that those people in our community who are vulnerable because of mental illness receive the support they need.

Recognition of every person's right to live in the community has been welcomed in the mental health field. However, services have never been able to fully meet the needs of clients. Accommodation services, in particular, are in very short supply in the nation's capital and there is little in the way of early intervention services for people living with psychotic illness. Deficits have also been identified in services for people whose first language is not English.

There is a need for more holistic services that meet the needs of people with a mental illness during both the maintenance and acute phases of their illness. This was reflected in the findings of the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner's report to the ACT Government in November 2002 which emphasised the need to move away from a crisis management service to a crisis avoidance service.

The lack of early intervention and maintenance services has led to the situation where mental health problems are more prevalent among people detained by the police than in the general community (SANE News, Summer 2002-03). The lack of facilities in Canberra to accommodate these people has led to some high profile court cases, where people suffering from a known mental illness are kept in custody because of a lack of forensic facilities and after care. ACTCOSS has recommended in its *Principles for a Best Practice Remand System* that all people found to be suffering from significant mental health problems when taken into custody should be removed to a secure mental health facility as a matter of course. ACTCOSS believes there is an urgent need to remodel the existing forensic facility to ensure that such cases can be appropriately dealt with in a health facility, not a corrections facility.

Recommendation 25: That the recommendations of the Commissioner for Community and Health Service complaints regarding accommodation options for people with a mental illness be implemented as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 26: That the other recommendations of the Community and Health Service Complaints Commissioner that have been adopted be outlined in the Budget, with indications of how the recommendations will be met by the Mental Health Action Plan.

Recommendation 27: That sufficient funds be appropriated to ensure the Mental Health Action Plan can achieve its goals and to provide for better support for people living with mental illness.

Recommendation 28: That specific services be developed to ensure people with a dual diagnosis receive holistic services that meet their needs.

Recommendation 29: That forensic mental health services be established as a matter of priority in conjunction with the new ACT Remand Centre.

DISABILITY SERVICES

ACTCOSS believes that the ACT community has been deeply affected by the Gallop inquiry and the recommendations of the Disability Reform Group. As will be outlined later in this submission, community expectations have been raised by the open and consultative approach the Government has taken on disability reform.

This anticipation has been complemented by Disability ACT's efforts to develop a working model to guide the reform process: *"Steps to Reform: 2002-2005"*.

The sector is also eagerly awaiting the implementation of the changes to the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. As in aged care, transport is a major issue for people with a disability. The reforms in the TSS are one of the ways the Government can address this particular area of disadvantage and poverty, allowing better access to services and community participation for people who cannot use other forms of transport. ACTCOSS urges the Government to progress these reforms expeditiously.

A corollary to the improved transport options is continued work on accessibility. As users of human services, people with a disability are often the most affected by any lack of accessibility in community buildings. ACTCOSS believes the Government has a major role to play in leading by example in this regard and ensure all Government owned buildings are brought up to standard in this regard.

The provision of human services in the disability sector is dependent on the ability of service providers to employ and adequately train staff to deal with the realities of assisting people with a disability to participate in their community to their fullest potential.

As outlined in Theme 2, Community Sector Viability, funding of SACS Award increases will be vital to ensure that the sector is able to attract people into jobs. This will need to be complemented with high-quality training to ensure a culture of continuous improvement is fostered in disability services.

To this end, ACTCOSS agrees with the Budget submission presented to the Government by DPI, which recommends a small grants scheme, a quality improvement initiative and a disability services skills development strategy.

ACTCOSS notes that some Government-owned and community leased premises are not accessible to people with a disability. Remedying this problem needs to take high priority.

Recommendation 30: That sufficient additional funds be provided to ensure that the needs already identified in the disability reform process are met without disadvantaging other areas of service delivery.

Recommendation 31: That the Government expedite the announced reforms to the Taxi Transport Scheme.

Recommendation 32: That the Government provide funds to allow for accessibility upgrades of all Government owned and community-leased premises.

Recommendation 33: That the ACT Government ensure that funds are available to meet SACS Award increase.

INDIGENOUS SUPPORT SERVICES –

ACTCOSS congratulates the ACT Government on its recent initiatives to establish an Aboriginal housing service in Canberra. This service will be a welcome addition to the suite of services to help address disadvantage in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Addressing disadvantage is a complex challenge, which cannot be overcome by isolated and single-issue services. The problems caused by historical injustices are not simple, and often include a mix of health, housing and employment problems, compounded by the poor record of Aboriginal education, which the ACT has not escaped.

The Council also reiterates here its earlier comment that community-based, culturally appropriate health services are also important in addressing disadvantage.

ACTCOSS believes that self-determination should be a hallmark of the services funded by the ACT Government to service local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Services also need to be holistic, and to provide “one stop shop” approaches to complex needs.

Recommendation 34: That the ACT Government take note of, and implement, the recommendations of the various reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage in the ACT, and further consult with local service providers to identify and fund services to fill gaps in service.

CORRECTIONS –

The ACT prison has dominated consideration of the Canberra response to crime over the past few years. ACTCOSS believes that building a prison is no substitute for good, resourced and responsive sentencing alternatives, coupled with early intervention programs that help lessen the known criminal precursors, such as low social skills, drug use, mental illness and poor education outcomes. ACTCOSS is actively putting its views on this aspect of corrections to the review of sentencing currently underway in the Territory.

ACTCOSS took encouragement from the Labor Party's promise on coming into Government that it would look develop a prison model based on programs and rehabilitation rather than warehousing prisoners. Financial pressures have since been cited to explain the lack of progress in developing the prison. However ACTCOSS believes that the delay will be to the detriment of the ACT.

The Council is now concerned that the construction of a replacement for the Belconnen Remand Centre and the Symondston facility will be delayed on the premise that the cost of the ACT fires has pushed back public spending priorities. ACTCOSS, through its Community Coalition on Corrections is in the process of completing a booklet, outlining what is seen as best practice principles for an ACT remand system. It takes as its basic premise that a remand system should offer a restorative and rehabilitative model of service delivery. As the Government knows, the situation has been critical for some time, with the temporary facility at Symondston only a stop-gap measure. The Council believes the new facility must proceed, with funds committed in this Budget cycle to get planning and site selection underway.

Recommendation 35: That the ACT Government include funds for site location and design for the proposed new remand centre in the 2003-04 Budget.

GAMBLING COUNSELLING –

ACTCOSS convenes a Gambling Reference Group to assist in its policy formulation and response to inquiries. The Group is comprised of service providers in the area of gambling addiction counselling and ancillary services required by people who have gambling problems.

The Group has actively responded to calls for comment on the various legislative and policy reviews being undertaken by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (GRC) and has followed with interest the establishment of the Chair of Gambling Research at the Australian National University.

There is still a level of frustration, however, with the lack of a formal response from the Commission or the Government to the research the GRC commissioned from the Australian Institute for Gambling Research in 2001. The members feel that the *ACT Needs Analysis: Gambling Support Services* and *Survey of the Nature and Extent of Gambling and Problem Gambling in the ACT* require a response from the Government.

The Group recognises that services have undergone some expansion with the creation of Gambling Care. However problem gambling is still a major area of concern for many service providers. The ACT Treasury analysis presented to the 2004 Grants Commission process shows that gambling income for ACT consolidated revenue is coming from the pockets of people who can least afford it. ACTCOSS believes that a greater effort needs to be made to reduce gambling associated harm in Canberra, and a first step would be an analysis of the two commissioned reports.

Recommendation 36: That the Gambling and Racing Commission produce an analysis of the two Australian Institute of Gambling Research papers on ACT gambling, including policy and program responses to overcome problem gambling in Canberra.

YOUTH SERVICES –

ACTCOSS has worked closely with the Youth Coalition of the ACT for many years, and has valued that organisation's ability to clearly identify the needs of young people living with disadvantage.

ACTCOSS supports the Youth Coalition Budget submission, which asks for funding for the lack of full indexation in 2002-03, support for the outcomes of the many reviews and consultations the group has participated in over the past 18 months and funds to meet training needs and funds for mental health initiatives for young people. Among other things, the Youth Coalition has also asked for specific funding for in-school service delivery, a night shelter for Civic, a refuge in the Gungahlin area, initiatives in the area of dual diagnosis (including a residential facility) and health promotion and early intervention funds.

All the Youth Coalition of the ACT's requests are aimed at meeting the shortfall in services for Canberra's young people.

Recommendation 37: That the ACT Government favourably consider funding requests from the Youth Coalition of the ACT for urgently needed services for young people, and that the Government consider this expenditure an investment in the future of these important members of our community.

RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN SERVICES

ACTCOSS has stated in many forums that there is insufficient understanding of the economic grounds for the provision of funds to provide services for people living with disadvantage. In terms of raising revenue to pay for services, such revenue is often assumed to be foregone and unproductive.

ACTCOSS asserts that such revenue is an investment in human capital that provides quantifiable economic growth. Other studies have also shown that investment in human services through the non-profit community welfare sector provides:

- Services that are used by most people across the course of their lives;
- Support for individuals and families that builds community capacity;
- Mobilisation of voluntarism and community networks; and
- Establishes and maintains social capital. (ACOSS 1999. Common Cause – relationships and reforms in community services. Sydney).

In much of the academic literature, development of human capital has focused on education and skills building. ACTCOSS contends that such development cannot happen for a person that is homeless or inadequately housed, has inadequate support to participate in education or community activities, or whose health status is unsatisfactory. This is even more demonstrably true for young people (including small children) experiencing housing or health problems.

As outlined in other parts of this submission, the building of human services is one positive way that the ACT Government can improve the health and wellbeing of the citizenry of Canberra. Such services are the cornerstone of developing the ACT's human capital and its economy.

Recommendation 38: That the ACT Government increase its investment in human services in the ACT, in recognition of the economic and community benefits of such investments.

THEME 4

Government commitment to implementing the findings of reviews, policies and reforms affecting the community sector

THEME 4: REVIEWS

ACTCOSS and its member organisations have been involved in the following range of reviews and inquiries since the ALP won office in October 2001:

- Bushfire Recovery Taskforce community reference group
- Health sector reorganisation
- Affordable Housing Task Force
- Disability reform process, including Disability Reform Group (DRG)
- A Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT
- Economic White Paper
- Social Plan
- Spatial Plan
- Sustainability policy review
- Sentencing review
- Education funding review
- Review of school counselling services
- Purchaser Provider changes
- Mental health reviews
- Asset management review
- Concessions review
- ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Revenue Inquiry

This list does not include other Governmental processes such as reviews by the various regulatory commissions and the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission.

These reviews and the concerted effort the Government is putting into ensuring that it proceeds on the basis of evidence-based policy is to be applauded and is very welcome in the sector. The community sector has known since the 1999-2000 ABS survey of community services that this sector is a large employer and generator of economic activity. (ABS 2003 Cat. No. 8696.0) What has now been recognised is that the sector is also an area of high-level expertise that can add tremendous value to evidence-based policy making.

The community services sector has also undergone radical reorganisation over the past decade, with the introduction of contracts and purchaser-provider arrangements. Community organisations have had to develop in-house expertise on contracting, insurance, personnel management, accounting standards and other skills required to bid for and gain contracts to provide services previously funded from the grants system.

The result, in 2003, is that the community sector has achieved a high level of professionalism and expertise in the business of providing human services. However, funding has not kept pace with the skills and training upgrade, leaving many service stretched to meet their core business requirements. Unlike many small and medium commercial operators in Canberra, community organisations often operate with a minimum number of paid staff, supplementing their work with volunteers.

This means that contributions to the Government's inquiry processes often become a matter of individual effort, with many community sector participants attending meetings and doing the required reading and research in their own time. ACTCOSS believes that this is inequitable when compared to the consideration given to public servants and paid corporate employees to take part in equivalent consultations in other sectors.

Recommendation 39: That the Government provide funds to compensate community organisations and their members for their time and effort in participating in Government consultation processes. The quantum of such compensation and claimable items should be discussed with one of the more formal groups, such as the Disability Advisory Council, then adapted to cover other community sector organisations.

The expectation in the community sector is that the Government is committed to improving services in the many areas of social and welfare service provision that relate to the above list of inquiries and consultations. In anticipation of favourable outcomes, community organisations have committed extra resources to ensure that their voice was heard in the various processes and issues reviewed.

ACTCOSS is concerned that **not** providing resources to implement the most important priorities of these reviews and inquiries will be a setback for the sector. The Council actively promotes the participation of consumers and their supporters in Government consultations as the best way to get robust evidence for policy and practice change. One of the costs of not providing funds to implement the findings of these reviews and processes at this time is the potential loss of community sector participation in future inquiries, reviews and consultations. ACTCOSS would view such a withdrawal of expertise as a major setback to the Government's commitment to evidence-based policy development.

Recommendation 40: That the ACT Government provide commitments in the 2003-04 Budget for funding priorities for each of the above reviews, consultations, policy development exercises and regulatory reviews.

ACTCOSS has been involved in many of the consultations, either directly or through the participation of a member group or consumer. The Council offers the following comments on some of the areas it sees as priorities for these processes.

Bushfire Recovery Taskforce community reference group

- Inclusion of community service providers and consumer organisations in post-fire support measures, as per recommendations under Theme 1: Responding to need after the ACT fires.

Sector Reform following the Reid Review

- The highest priority needs to be developing and consulting on a new funding policy. Current funding arrangements were rolled over in June 2002 for 12 months with a view to implementing the recommendations of the review of purchaser-provider contracts. This review was recommended

by the Reid inquiry. This review is now overdue and the delay is causing considerable distress in the community sector.

- The review of complaints mechanisms was also a recommendation of the Reid Review. Given the experience of the restructuring of the former Health Department was not a revenue neutral exercise, funds need to be allocated for the outcomes of the review of complaints mechanisms.

Affordable Housing Task Force

- As outlined in Theme 3: Shortages in basic human services, ACTCOSS believes that recommendations for increased social housing by the Affordable Housing Task Force should include increased investment in public housing stock.

Disability reform process, including DRG

- ACTCOSS believes the implementation of the 'local area coordination' system should be a priority for the process, along with increased funding for individual support packages.

Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT

- The recommendations of the Needs Analysis on Homelessness in the ACT must be addressed as a priority. ACTCOSS would find it hard to pick single areas of need, as homelessness affects a large part of the Council's constituency. However two urgent needs involve the provision of appropriate services for families who are homeless (a priority reinforced by the AIHW/CMD report on human services), and funding for a high-profile coordinating body to assist homeless people in obtaining crisis accommodation. Such a coordinating body would have a role in analysing need and providing feedback on quality.

Economic White Paper

- ACTCOSS has not had time to fully analyse the Government's discussion paper, *Building Canberra's Economy*, but believes that in any assessment of the future needs of Canberra the economic return on investment in human services must be recognised and funded. It is also vital that the type of economic development pursued by the Government be that type which will reduce inequality and provide diverse opportunities for participation.

Social Plan

- ACTCOSS is unimpressed at the priorities that put the development of an economic plan ahead of the development of the Canberra social plan. ACTCOSS asserts that before the means of funding the ACT are decided, it is necessary to decide on the future social development of the capital.
- When all three plans are available for comment, they need to be integrated under a Canberra plan. The process of achieving this and implementing the combined product will need a high level reference group with secretariat support and a brief to develop strategic partnerships

within, across and outside of Government to achieve the aim of a sustainable blueprint for the future.

Spatial Plan

- Again, ACTCOSS cannot see how the spatial development of Canberra can be decided after the social plan. The importance of this is demonstrated by the debate now taking place on the future of the pine forests and their residential settlements. As in this example, it is clear that planning for physical development depends on social priorities.

Sustainability policy review

- ACTCOSS views some measures already in train as being good demonstrations of commitment in this regard, including the Residents of Childers and Kingsley Streets (ROCKS) Community Precinct Redevelopment, the insulation rebates for low income earners, and the single zone fare system for ACTION. ACTCOSS would now like to see a blueprint, along with the social, spatial and economic development plans, on how this policy initiative will shape the ACT's future.
- ACTCOSS urges the ACT Government to achieve some initial sustainability outcomes by providing greater support to the ROCKS redevelopment project and large concessions to people on low incomes to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

Sentencing review

- ACTCOSS is hopeful that the sentencing review will have some capacity to engage in community education to allow for better understanding of law and order issues. This can then inform the development of plans for a model prison based, as per the ALP election promise, on the rehabilitation of offenders.

Education funding review

- The Education Funding Review report appears to have endorsed a "steady as she goes" approach. ACTCOSS would like to see more integrations and linkages between school-based social and welfare services and those provided in the broader community.

Review of school counselling services

- The disability sector in particular has an interest in this review, but many parents may have suffered a degree of "burnout" in the past 18 months given the number of other review processes that have been undertaken on the needs of children with disabilities. Care should be taken to ensure the process has adequate resources to provide alternate consultation methods.
- Moreover, it is crucial that this review takes into account the needs identified by this group.

Purchaser Provider changes

- As outlined above, concern is growing about the terms of the new contracts that will be offered to agencies. ACTCOSS urges the Government to communicate its intentions to the sector urgently.

Mental health reviews

- As outlined in Theme 3, Shortages in basic human services, there are many areas of mental health reform that require urgent resourcing. ACTCOSS would see the establishment of a mental health peak as one way of facilitating communication between the Government and the sector on priority issues.

Asset management review

- ACTCOSS has presented its views on this important issue in Theme 2: Community Sector Viability.

Concessions review

- ACTCOSS sees concessions as a valuable tool in redressing disadvantage within the community. The issue will be canvassed further in Theme 5: Revenue raising measures to fund service increases.

ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Revenue Inquiry

- This last inquiry was not directed by the current Government, but was instigated by the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Committee is expected to report later in 2003. However ACTCOSS would urge the Government to seriously consider developing a revenue policy based on equitable, fair and progressive taxation measures.

ACTCOSS has provided a copy of its Revenue submission as an attachment to this budget submission.

THEME 5

Revenue raising measures

THEME 5: REVENUE RAISING MEASURES

The electorate is steeling itself for a fire tax to assist with meeting the costs of the January fires. The Government has already presented an additional appropriation bill to the Assembly asking for \$17.295 million as part of the 2002-03 Budget allocation. The Treasurer has indicated in interviews that the net damage bills after insurance payouts will be in the region of \$20million.

ACTCOSS congratulates the ACT Government on its foresight in providing for insurance that appears to be comprehensively covering against catastrophic loss from the ACT fires. While not everything can be covered by insurance, it appears the ACT has been adequately covered in a financial sense.

There will be new processes, such as the McLeod inquiry and the Coronial inquiry, to be funded. There will also be other processes accelerated, such as the decision on the future use of the ACT forests and the forest settlements. There are possibly other issues that may present themselves over time that have not been factored into Budgetary measures. These will all generate expenses that need to be met.

In the interim, it is expected that the Government will spend in the order of \$40-60million of an estimated \$70million dollar bill to ensure timely restoration of services and amenity (e.g. the Lower Molonglo water treatment and sewerage facility repairs).

ACTCOSS has argued in past years that the ACT Government should consider deficit budgeting to meet the need for capital building within the community. ACTCOSS now asks that the Government considers a long term approach to meeting the costs incurred because of the fires, and does not attempt to bring the Budget back into surplus within this first term of office.

Recommendation 41: That the ACT Government not use any deficit in the 2003-04 Budget as a rationale to introduce severe cuts in the 2004-05 Budget for the sake of going to an election with a paper surplus.

If a tax is to be raised, it should be administered as a separate account from consolidated revenue and any exchange between the post-fires recovery account and consolidated revenue noted and publicised. As insurance receipts are processed, funds from this account can then be applied to restore community capacity in the out years.

This should take into account the requests from the community sector for compensation for indirect and less directly attributable costs of the fires, as discussed in Theme 1.

Recommendation 42: That all monies raised to ensure timely and efficient recovery from the ACT fires be separately accounted for in their own statement.

Recommendation 43: That once insurance compensation payouts begin to flow to the ACT, this money be applied to community capacity building in recognition of the long-term effects of the fires on the wider ACT population.

In past years the ALP, when in Opposition, was critical of Governments for re-badging and recycling of funds. ACTCOSS also pointed out in its submission to the 2000-01 Draft Budget review that not being able to identify the source of funding for programs was a hindrance in analysing the budget. (ACTCOSS, Investing in the Community: March 2001)

ACTCOSS believes that clear and transparent explanations of all new program funding, information on whether the funding is being provided from new revenue measures, and whether funds have been diverted from other programs to meet the emerging or recognised need will provide more accountability in the Budget.

A financial statement that goes into some detail in outlining the costs and any increased revenues raised as a result of the fires would also be useful in assisting the ACT community to understand the financial impacts of the fires.

Recommendation 44: That all new programs and funding initiatives are explained in terms of their funding sources, including any programs that have been wound-back, suffered reduced funding or abolished to pay for budget initiatives.

However, outside of the debate over the cost of the fires, ACTCOSS believes there is a need to increase the revenue base for the ACT. The Council has made submissions to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the issue of revenue, including the need to ensure that taxes, fees and fines are equitable. (A copy of the revenue submission can be found on the ACTCOSS website: www.actcoss.org.au)

ACTCOSS believes it is important that all taxes, fees and fines are analysed and reported on to ensure that ACT revenue raising is progressive and based on capacity to pay. The Council also believes that transparency should be a hallmark of the ACT tax system, with adequate explanation and disclosure of revenue raising measures. (See recommendations of the attached Revenue submission)

Recommendation 45: That the analysis begun in 2000 by the ACT Treasury on the equity of ACT revenue raising measures be continued and that such analysis be presented on the ACT Government website.

In terms of new taxes to be raised, ACTCOSS' policy on revenue states that:

"ACTCOSS is committed to ensuring that all people have fair and equal access to good quality services in those areas important for their quality of life and is therefore committed to the maintenance of an adequate revenue base. ACTCOSS is also committed to the promotion of equity and therefore believes that taxation should be related to wealth (i.e., be targeted at those with the highest capacity to pay)."

ACTCOSS believes that the issue of sustainability in taxation has not been fully explored in Canberra. While motor vehicle charges use vehicle mass as a proxy for environmental (or road damage) impact, there is potential for exploring the idea of carbon-type taxes.

Such taxation measures also provide an opportunity to allow some of the revenue raised to be applied to sustainability measures for people living with disadvantage. For example, charging for water and electricity has the potential to build in progressive equity options that quarantine some of the revenue raised to provide, for example, water saving devices or insulation upgrades for people on low incomes who would not otherwise be able to make these improvements.

Recommendation 46: That the ACT Government explore the potential for sustainability taxation measures to be introduced in the ACT.

Another measure, applied in New South Wales to reduce city centre traffic congestion and could therefore be seen as a sustainability tax, has been the introduction of parking space levies. The New South Wales Government introduced this levy as a means of controlling the traffic in the congested Sydney centre and improving public transport usage. It has since been extended in its application to other busy urban centres. The levy is imposed on all corporate entities and individuals who provide parking spaces in the inner city area.

Recommendation 47: That the ACT Government investigate the phased introduction of parking space levies, along similar lines to the New South Wales levy.

ACTCOSS also reiterates its long standing support for further exploitation of our unique position as both state and local administrators to provide more streamlined land taxes. At present ACTCOSS has been asked to comment on the review of land rates, but the Government's decision on its future exploitation of that source of revenue is, as yet, unknown.

ACTCOSS believes that as a city-state, Canberra has the ability to use land taxes more broadly as an income stream. Such a tax also meets the desirable aim of taxing accumulated capital. At present, land tax is only charged on rental properties and commercial buildings. Given the rise in Average Unimproved Values (AUVs) over the past two years, any tax on land using this as a valuation tool is going to reap windfalls for Government. ACTCOSS believes that land tax, based on AUVs, should be extended to cover all properties over a given AUV. That benchmark would be considered the luxury end of housing in the ACT, and should be expressed as a multiple of Territory-wide average AUV. At the present time the Council believes that such a tax should not be levied on properties of AUV less than \$200,000, although this is just an indicative figure and should be decided on after a review of land tax rates. There could be additional benefits in that land tax would not then apply to rental purchases in the lower price range, providing a possible incentive for the growth in affordable rental housing.

ACTCOSS envisages that such a tax would move with AUVs, but would be unlikely to decline in real terms over time, due to the expansion and redevelopment of land with the Territory's borders.

Recommendation 48: That the ACT Government look at applying land tax to all ACT residential properties, using a multiple of the average AUV for the whole of the ACT as a base.

As with all taxation measures there needs to be adequate concessions on land tax available for people who live with disadvantage, including people who are asset rich and income poor. ACTCOSS would envisage that most of these people would be retirees, although there may be other circumstances that may warrant concessions.

ACTCOSS notes that the Federal Government has recently criticised the ACT over the level of concessions and rebates offered to people receiving income support. ACTCOSS believes that this is a complex issue that the ACT Government is already tackling through its review of concessions and rebates. The Council believes that the review needs to be part of the overall Budget strategy, as the revenue foregone to alleviate financial hardship should be factored into the financial statements.

Recommendation 49: That the 18 month old concessions review be processed and finalised with the input of the Joint Community Sector Government Reference Group.

Recommendation 50: That a statement of the costs incurred through concessions and rebates be included as part of the ACT's Budget.

ACTCOSS has also been concerned in recent years that the ACT is not taking advantage of the payroll tax system. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Small Business Employment found that of all the factors that affect employment decisions, the level of Payroll Tax had a marginal impact.

The Productivity Commission in 1998 found that competition between the states was producing a lower level of payroll tax, and that this was one area of state taxation that could be further exploited (Productivity Commission May 1998). Currently the ACT Government allows a \$1.25million exemption, and charges a single rate of 6.85%. New South Wales has a \$600,000 threshold, and charges 6.00%. Both jurisdictions include eligible termination payments and employer superannuation contributions to calculate the tax liability. There appears to be some capacity for the introduction of a sliding scale, similar to that applied in Western Australia, which would further enhance the progressivity of the tax.

Recommendation 51: That the payroll tax exemption threshold be set at a lower level, matching that of New South Wales and that the Government investigate the use of a sliding scale of payroll tax rates.

ACTCOSS also views with concern the amount of business assistance provided without sufficient explanation of the real benefits and returns to the ACT economy. In light of the Productivity Commission's recent review of such business welfare, ACTCOSS believes that more robust analysis of the benefits of such assistance should be undertaken (Productivity Commission, Trade and

Assistance Review, 2002). The estimate of \$53million is a considerable sum to be dispersed, but so poorly explained (The Commission also referred to some \$100million given in payroll tax exemptions to the non-welfare sector).

ACTCOSS asserts that the best use of business support funding is to build and develop local human capital. This can be done through the provision of skills enhancement, adequate training and a supportive employment market. Investment in community services would have extensive flow-on benefits for the ACT (ACTCOSS, Feb., 2003).

The Council notes that, at present, business assistance appears to be flowing out of the Territory, and not providing long term gains. ACT rate and tax payers deserve more detailed information about the various schemes operating to assist business development in the ACT and what the ultimate benefits of this type of assistance are.

Recommendation 52: That all business assistance measures be identified in the budget, and that plain English explanations of the quantum and expected benefits be provided. Annual reports should also provide analysis and reporting of the outcomes of such assistance.

ACTCOSS does see merit in providing infrastructure as part of the business support program and believes the development of a new multi-use convention centre, that facilitates community sector conferences as well as large commercial events, would be a major asset for the Canberra community.

Recommendation 53: That the Government use business assistance funds for the development of a new, centrally located and multi-function convention centre that facilitates community as well as private sector use.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
ALP	Australian Labor Party
CMD	ACT Chief Minister's Department
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DPI	Disabled People's Initiative ACT
DRG	Disability Reform Group
FaBRiC	Family Based Respite Care Incorporated
GRC	ACT Gambling and Racing Commission
HACC	Home and Community Care
IT	Information Technology
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
ROCKS	Residents of Childers and Kingsley Streets
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SACS Award	Social and Community Services Award