



## **Comment**

on

## **Canberra 100 Celebration of a Century:**

## **A Discussion Paper**

**December  
2005**

### **INTRODUCTION**

ACTCOSS acknowledges that modern day Canberra has been built on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered since European settlement. ACTCOSS celebrates the Ngunnawal's living culture and valuable contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage, and low-income citizens of the 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's objectives are representation of people living with disadvantage, the promotion of equitable social policy, and the development of a professional, cohesive and effective 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.

ACTCOSS receives funding from the Community Services Program (CSP) which is funded by the ACT Government.

ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

## ACTCOSS Comment on Canberra 100: Celebration of a Century: A Discussion Paper

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the initial public consultations in preparation for the Centenary of Canberra.

**Canberra: An Inclusive Capital:** ACTCOSS recognises the importance of remembering and learning from our shared history, and support the importance of the ACT Government's efforts to educate Australians about the history and aspirations of their national capital.

In particular, we see Canberra as representing an aspiration to build a socially equitable city. While this remains a work in progress, Canberra is distinguished by having the lowest levels of income inequality and lower rates of poverty than any other Australian city. That achievement is a positive one, and ought to be a central theme of any celebration. Similarly, our aspirations for the future should include the elimination of poverty and the continuing project of creating a socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable city into the future.

**Recognition of our Indigenous People:** While Canberra will be officially be celebrating 100 years as the national capital in 2014, there have been people living here for thousands of years. While it is important to recognise the history of Canberra in light of its role in the Australian nation-state, it is equally important to discuss the much longer history of the indigenous people, both previous to European settlement and their continuing history and contribution to Canberra since. Indigenous themes should retain a strong focus in any celebration, both in the recognition of their past achievements and utilising the occasion to continue the process of reconciliation.

**Community Inclusion:** The discussion paper frequently emphasises that the celebrations should be for *all* Australians. This means that the choice of events and the processes of event planning should emphasise social inclusion – ensuring that events encourage and facilitate attendance by people experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion, for example, by ensuring that event costs do not preclude low-income earners from attending, that all celebrations are accessible for people with a disability, or that events are accessible by public transport.

**Encouraging community ownership and direction:** Event planning should be an inclusive and empowering process. Rather than centrally directing events, emphasis should be placed on resourcing community groups to manage and stage their own events, and encouraging partnerships between government, community and business. The advent of the centenary provides not only an opportunity to celebrate Canberra's past and future, but provides an occasion for diverse organisations and communities to forge new collaborations and linkages that can last well beyond the centenary.

**Choice of Projects:** ACTCOSS would encourage the Centenary committee to ensure that capital projects should be of continuing use and value to the Canberra community. In keeping with this theme, projects should be functional and be of use to the diverse communities of Canberra, not simply for the benefit of tourists or those in the corporate world.

**ACTCOSS is turning 50:** ACTCOSS was established in 1963, with its inaugural Chairman John Dedman and President George Currie. Since that time, the ACTCOSS board has been represented by a range of notable Canberra identities, and our history is intertwined with the people of Canberra, and the social and political changes in the city.

ACTCOSS' fiftieth birthday coincides with Canberra's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. ACTCOSS will have represented the interests of disadvantaged Canberrans and Canberra community organisations for half a century, and we believe the incidence of these two milestones is fortuitous, and would allow scope for ACTCOSS' 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations to be incorporated into the broader celebration of the Centenary of Canberra.

While event planning has not yet commenced, ACTCOSS anticipates that our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be a focal point for celebration of the important work contributed by the ACT Community Sector, and would express our hope for collaboration with the ACT Government and the Centenary of Canberra Committee in preparing for this important occasion.