



## **Stay Survey**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
community sector workers**

**October 2010**

## About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges that 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 as a result of European settlement. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing 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 and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' objectives are a community in which all people have the opportunities and resources needed to participate in and benefit from social and economic life and the development of a dynamic, collaborative and viable 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Project receives funding under National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), which is jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments.

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

### Contact Details

Phone: 02 6202 7200  
Fax: 02 6281 4192  
Mail: PO Box 849, Mawson ACT 2607  
E-mail: [actcoss@actcoss.org.au](mailto:actcoss@actcoss.org.au)  
WWW: <http://www.actcoss.org.au>  
Location: Level 1,  
67 Townshend St,  
Phillip ACT 2606

Director: Roslyn Dundas  
Deputy Director: Kiki Korpinen  
Sector Development  
Officers: Julie Butler, George Wilson  
Policy Officer: Samara Rahman

October 2010

© Copyright ACT Council of Social Service Incorporated

This publication is copyright, apart from use by those agencies for which it has been produced. Non-profit associations and groups have permission to reproduce parts of this publication as long as the original meaning is retained and proper credit is given to the ACT Council of Social Service Inc (ACTCOSS). All other individuals and agencies seeking to reproduce material from this publication should obtain the permission of the Director of ACTCOSS.

## Introduction

Stay surveys can be used as tools to ascertain why people remain with their current employers. They are also often used by organisations as a means to receive feedback from their employees about their jobs.

In July 2010 ACTCOSS conducted stay surveys with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the ACT community sector. The survey was distributed electronically through the Homelessness Network (Hnet) and both electronically and in person through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Sector (ATSICOMSEC) Network.

The surveys provided insight into the issues affecting and concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the ACT Homelessness Sector. The questions were broad, and covered a wide range of areas, effectively providing a broad picture of various employers, and the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers.

Participants were provided one month to complete the survey. Respondents remained anonymous and all information is being kept strictly confidential. Seven survey responses were received.

## Key Issues

The Stay surveys highlighted a number of issues. Generally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector are quite happy with their respective employers. The flexibility and conditions of the workplace were very highly regarded by the respondents, though the need for extra funding and resources was noted. According to the survey responses, most workplaces recognise the efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Most workers also reported regular access to training and development programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers reported they would benefit from a range of training seminars, from report writing to formal vocational training. The majority of respondents also stated cultural awareness training was beneficial for non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander colleagues. Respondents stated they would like more networking opportunities with other workers and organisations in the sector.

## Demographic Information

The results demonstrated that all respondents had been with their current employers from between 1 and 6 years. The time spent working in the community sector on a whole ranged from 1 year to 10-15 years.

None of the respondents were under the age of 30. One was over the age of 60. Four females and three males completed the survey.

## Training and Development

On the issue of Training and Development the majority stated they have access to Training and Development on a regular basis, one indicated it was on an annual basis and another stated it was in-frequent.

Survey responses indicated the types of training that people would like, as being:

- report writing;
- suicide awareness/self-harm awareness training;
- cultural awareness training;
- computer training;
- how to gain ongoing funding;
- professional development in chosen field;
- recruitment and retention;
- dealing with aggressive clients; and
- community organisational networking

## Current Satisfaction

Those surveyed stated they strongly agree and agree that their current place of employment provides recognition for their efforts on a regular basis. One person strongly disagreed. The current level of motivation to put forward their best effort in the workplace was found to be good to excellent with one stating that it was about average.

The level of satisfaction with work colleagues found approximately 57% to be excellent and 29% good, the other 14% stating that it was poor.

Participants were also asked what they like most about their current employment. The results are tabled below:

Location	71%	Flexibility	86%
Type of work	86%	Supporting clients	71%
Colleagues	71%	Remuneration	43%
Conditions	57%	Cultural understanding/awareness	57%
Career development opportunities	57%		

Other factors which added to the overall satisfaction with the job included:

- supportive workplaces;
- being able to learn from and teach non-indigenous staff; and
- working with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.

One respondent commented remuneration packages for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers could be improved, and another noted a need for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers.

## Proposed Changes

The survey asked participants what their current employer could do to better facilitate and support their needs. The participants responded:

- managers and staff to listen and learn from each other's experiences more;
- managers to be more open to the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers;
- greater networking opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers across the sector on a more regular basis;
- greater gender balance of male and female workers in the office;
- more young people in the office;
- flexibility in the office;
- cultural awareness training for non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander staff;
- a supportive workplace; and
- greater understanding from management around the demands faced by workers and the difficulty in achieving deadlines because of this.

When asked if they could change one thing about their current job, the participants responded:

- higher pay rates and better conditions, including payouts of leave entitlements, sick leave and annual leave;
- better linkage with mainstream service providers;
- greater resources, and higher pay for front line workers engaging with people in crisis;
- long term funding for the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in their respective projects; and
- the establishment of an Indigenous Unit within some services.

## Future Actions

ACTCOSS aim to use this information when planning future training and seminars to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector. ACTCOSS has already begun planning a workshop on report writing, an area which was specified as a training workers would like to receive. ACTCOSS will also be presenting a seminar at a Homelessness Forum to brief organisations on the outcomes of the survey. It is intended this information will further inform organisations on how to better retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers.

## Links to key documents

ACTCOSS will continue to promote the Cultural Awareness Self Assessment Tool Kit (CASAT) and follow the actions on our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to improve retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector.

The ACTCOSS CASAT can be found at

[http://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Publications\\_2009/2109PAP.pdf](http://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Publications_2009/2109PAP.pdf)

The ACTCOSS RAP can be found at

[http://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Publications\\_2010/2010PUB.pdf](http://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Publications_2010/2010PUB.pdf)