

Social Compact Survey

2011

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.

ACTCOSS receives funding from the ACT Government - Community Services Directorate.

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
WWW: <http://www.actcoss.org.au>
Location: Weston Community Hub,
1/6 Gritten St,
Weston ACT 2611

Director: Roslyn Dundas
Deputy Director: Kiki Korpinen

August 2011

ISBN 978-1-921651-46-5 (electronic version)
© 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.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Background to the Survey.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Who participated?	5
The Results.....	6
Awareness and Relevancy.....	6
Relationships.....	6
The content of the Compact.....	6
Next Steps	7
Appendix A: Full Survey Results.....	8
Q1 – Work type of respondents.....	8
Q2 – Length of Service.....	9
Q3 – Social Compact Awareness.....	10
Q4 – Social Compact Relevancy.....	11
Q5 & 6 – Social Compact and Relationships	12
Q7 – Focus of the Social Compact.....	14
Appendix B: The Survey (ACT Government).....	15
Appendix C: The Joint Community Government Reference Group	17
Terms of Reference	17
Membership	17

Introduction

The Social Compact between the community sector and the ACT Government is a statement of understanding about the relationship between the two sectors. In 2001 the ACT Government, entered into a social compact with the community sector. This Compact was reviewed and re-released in 2004.

The Social Compact can be found on the website of the Community Services Directorate: http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/strategic_policy and the ACT Council of Social Service: <http://www.actcoss.org.au/about/docs.html>

Research by the Australia Institute found in order for a Compact to be successful it must:

- Be known: government officials and both large and small NGOs whose work falls within the ambit of the Compact must be aware of its existence and understand its implications;
- Be monitored: a check of some sort is required to ensure the commitments made within the Compact are being met. One way the Compact could be assessed is through a regular and comprehensive survey of NGOs;
- Include penalties: a penalty needs to apply if NGOs or government bodies do not comply with the arrangements made in the Compact;
- Have champions: there must be people in both the Australian Government and the NGO sector who firmly support the development and operation of a Compact.¹

Previous work undertaken by ACTCOSS has shown that the Social Compact has had a disappointingly low impact on the ground in promoting an equal and respectful relationship between Government and the community sector. In 2007 the key reasons for this low impact were identified by the ACT community sector as a lack of knowledge about the Social Compact, and a lack of means to address perceived breaches of the Social Compact.²

In 2010 the Federal Government launched a national Compact for the board not-for profit sector. The National Compact: *working together* was developed as a high-level document, based on aspirations and principles, which provides a framework for new ways of governing, including through forming innovative partnerships with the sector.³

The ACT Joint Community Government Reference Group (JCGRG), with the role of monitoring and providing strategic advice to the ACT Government on the implementation of the Social Compact, agreed to undertake a review of the ACT Compact in the light of progress of Compact arrangements both nationally and in other jurisdictions. The review of the Compact would look to understand perceived issues around knowledge and use of the Compact.

¹ Gemma Edgar, The Australia Institute, 2008, *Agreeing to Disagree: Maintaining Dissent in the NGO Sector*, p.27.

² ACTCOSS, 2007, *No Wrong Doors: Towards an integrated mental health service in the ACT*, p.18

³ Australian Government, www.nationalcompact.gov.au, accessed 2011

Background to the Survey

JCGRG agreed to initially undertake a short survey of the community and government sectors, to gauge knowledge and use of the Compact. The survey results (as outlined in this report) would then be used to guide future work.

Methodology

In January 2011 two surveys were prepared by ACTCOSS, for the ACT community sector and the public service. These surveys were reviewed by the JCGRG and circulated for completion using the online 'survey monkey' tool. The survey for the community sector was promoted on a range of electronic networks including targeted communication with a range of sub-sectors. The ACT Government survey was promoted across the whole of government through the All Staff Bulletin.

Results were collected from January to May 2011, with 120 community sector workers, and 120 public servants undertaking the survey.

Who participated?

120 community sector workers and 120 public servants commenced the survey with a significant proportion of those then going onto complete all questions.

The numbers engaging in the process represent approximately 2.4% of the ACT community sector and 0.5% of the ACT Public Service.⁴

A majority of community sector respondents indicated they had worked in the community sector for more than 8 years, and hence would have worked under the Compact in both the 2001 and 2004 iterations.

⁴ Commissioner for Public Administration, 2011 *ACT Public Service Workforce Profile 2009-10*

The Results

Awareness and Relevancy

“You could generally make the social compact more accessible – [it] sounds entirely bureaucratic”⁵

48% of ACT Government respondents indicated they were not aware of the Compact before completing the survey, while a majority of community sector respondents indicated they were highly or somewhat aware of the Compact.

Respondents choosing to leave free text answers indicated there was a need for better promotion of the Compact and its increased referencing and use in other community and government working documents.

Despite the low level of awareness, there was high recognition of the relevancy of the Compact to the work of the community sector and government.

Relationships

“Reciprocity in accountability”⁶

Despite the high recognition of relevancy of the Compact only one third of community sector respondents found it a useful tool for building relationships, and even less found it useful as an effective tool in on-going relationships.

This low level of identified usefulness of the Compact looked to be replicated through Government. However high proportions of Government respondents noted they did not use the Compact; of those who did a majority found it useful or very useful.

The content of the Compact

“The most problematic part of the Social Compact is not the document itself, but the apparent lack of knowledge within government about their responsibilities under it.”⁷

There was broad agreement that the areas of undertaking in the Compact could be improved. A number of respondents noted the need for improved accountability in the Compact. The Social Compact includes a “commit to the development of a mechanism for resolving differences where mediation does not produce an outcome”, however this has not been progressed to date.

There were also some questions raised about the scope of the Compact – with some respondents asking about the impact of the Compact on education, child care and environmental areas. The National Compact is intended as a broad commitment encompassing the entire not-for-profit sector (including community services, education, health, arts and environment as well as broad ranging volunteer groups). The ACT Social Compact is “a statement of understanding about the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector.”

⁵ ACT Government respondent, areas for inclusion comment 3

⁶ ACT Government respondent, areas for inclusion comment 11

⁷ Community Sector respondent, final comment 19

Next Steps

*"I see a lot of potential for the ACT Compact..."*⁸

While there is high awareness of the Compact and a desire for it to be relevant, it is not seen as a useful document.

The JCGRG in considering how to progress the partnership between the community sector and government through the social compact could consider the following issues:





1. Promotion of the Compact;
 - the role and promotion of JCGRG
2. Building relationships – and the usefulness of the Compact as a relationship tool;
3. The impact financial relationships have on relationships;
4. There is a need to be clear of who the Compact is for;
 - The scope of the Compact, and specifically the role of environmental, multicultural and education groups under the Compact
 - Relationships with government funded agencies
5. The Compact relationship to other documents and tools used by Government and the community sector.

⁸ Community Sector respondent, final comment 17





Appendix A: Full Survey Results

Q1 – Work type of respondents

Community Sector





1. I work in			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Direct Service Delivery		40.8%	49
Policy		11.7%	14
Management		40.8%	49
Volunteer/Board member		6.7%	8
answered question			120
skipped question			0

ACT Government

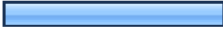



1. I work in			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Direct Service Delivery		48.3%	58
Policy Development		31.7%	38
Contract Management		6.7%	8
Senior Management		13.3%	16
answered question			120
skipped question			0

Q2 – Length of Service

Community Sector

2. I have worked in the sector (paid or volunteer) for			
		Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 3 years		25.8%	31
4 - 7 years		19.2%	23
8 - 10 years		7.5%	9
over 10 years		47.5%	57
answered question			120
skipped question			0

ACT Government





2. I have worked in ACT Government for			
		Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 3 years		38.3%	46
4 - 7 years		18.3%	22
8 - 10 years		10.8%	13
over 10 years		32.5%	39
answered question			120
skipped question			0

Q3 – Social Compact Awareness

Community Sector






3. How aware of the Social Compact are you?		Response Percent	Response Count
Highly aware - read the Compact, refer to it often		12.0%	11
Somewhat aware - read the Compact a while ago, some recollection of its content and purpose		40.2%	37
Somewhat unaware - have heard of the Compact but haven't read it		20.7%	19
unaware - this is the first I have heard of the Compact		27.2%	25
		answered question	92
		skipped question	28

ACT Government






3. How aware of the Social Compact are you?		Response Percent	Response Count
Highly aware - read the Compact, refer to it often		8.5%	8
Somewhat aware - read the Compact a while ago, some recollection of its content and purpose		28.7%	27
Somewhat unaware - have heard of the Compact but haven't read it		14.9%	14
unaware - this is the first I have heard of the Compact		47.9%	45
		answered question	94
		skipped question	26

Q4 – Social Compact Relevancy

Community Sector






4. Is the Social Compact relevant to your work?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Highly relevant		37.0%	34
somewhat relevant		38.0%	35
somewhat irrelevant		9.8%	9
irrelevant		2.2%	2
n/a		13.0%	12
answered question			92
skipped question			28


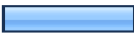



ACT Government

4. Is the Social Compact relevant to your work?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Highly relevant		27.2%	25
somewhat relevant		34.8%	32
somewhat irrelevant		8.7%	8
irrelevant		3.3%	3
n/a		26.1%	24
answered question			92
skipped question			28

Q5 & 6 – Social Compact and Relationships

Community Sector

5. Is the Social Compact useful in building your relationship with Government?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very useful		8.9%	8
Useful		25.6%	23
Ineffectual		28.9%	26
Not used		26.7%	24
n/a		10.0%	9
answered question			90
skipped question			30

6. Is the Social Compact an effective tool in your on-going relationship with Government?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very useful		5.6%	5
Useful		21.3%	19
Ineffectual		34.8%	31
Not used		28.1%	25
n/a		10.1%	9
answered question			89
skipped question			31

5. Is the Social Compact useful in building your relationship with community sector organisations?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very useful		7.6%	7
Useful		27.2%	25
Ineffectual		5.4%	5
Not used		37.0%	34
n/a		22.8%	21
answered question			92
skipped question			28

6. Is the Social Compact an effective tool in your on-going relationships with community sector organisations?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very useful		8.8%	8
Useful		28.6%	26
Ineffectual		3.3%	3
Not used		38.5%	35
n/a		20.9%	19
answered question			91
skipped question			29

Q7 – Focus of the Social Compact

Community Sector

7. The current Social Compact includes undertakings by ACT Government and the community sector in the following areas. Are these areas still a good focus for the Social Compact?				
	Working Well	Could be improved	No longer relevant	Response Count
Work With Government	20.8% (15)	75.0% (54)	4.2% (3)	72
Planning and Policy Development Processes	23.9% (17)	73.2% (52)	2.8% (2)	71
Governance, Management and Accountability	27.8% (20)	68.1% (49)	4.2% (3)	72
Quality in Services and Community Work	30.1% (22)	65.8% (48)	4.1% (3)	73
			answered question	73
			skipped question	47

ACT Government

7. The current Social Compact includes undertakings by ACT Government and the community sector in the following areas. Are these areas still a good focus for the Social Compact?				
	Working Well	Could be improved	No longer relevant	Response Count
Work With the Community Sector	34.4% (22)	62.5% (40)	3.1% (2)	64
Planning and Policy Development	25.8% (16)	66.1% (41)	8.1% (5)	62
Governance, Management and Accountability	29.0% (18)	64.5% (40)	6.5% (4)	62
Quality in Services and Programs	25.8% (16)	69.4% (43)	4.8% (3)	62
			answered question	64
			skipped question	56

Appendix B: The Survey (ACT Government)

The ACT Social Compact is a statement of undertaking about the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector. It provides a framework for relations between the community sector and the ACT Government by articulating the principles of good communication and partnership.

This is a brief survey. However, it will help immensely in continuing to improve the working relationship for the benefit of people and communities in the ACT.

All responses will remain anonymous. This basic demographic information will assist in the survey analysis.

1. I work in

Direct Service Delivery
Policy Development
Contract Management
Senior Management

2. I have worked in ACT Government for

0 - 3 years
4 - 7 years
8 - 10 years
over 10 years

3. How aware of the Social Compact are you?

Highly aware - read the Compact, refer to it often

Somewhat aware - read the Compact a while ago, some recollection of its content and purpose

Somewhat unaware - have heard of the Compact but haven't read it

unaware - this is the first I have heard of the Compact

4. Is the Social Compact relevant to your work?

Highly relevant

somewhat relevant

somewhat irrelevant

irrelevant

n/a

5. Is the Social Compact useful in building your relationship with community sector organisations?

Very useful

useful

ineffectual

Not used

n/a

6. Is the Social Compact an effective tool in your on-going relationships with community sector organisations?

Very useful

useful

ineffectual

Not used

n/a

7. The current Social Compact includes undertakings by ACT Government and the community sector in the following areas. Are these areas still a good focus for the Social Compact?

Working Well

Could be improved

No longer relevant

Work With the Community Sector
Planning and Policy Development
Governance, Management and Accountability
Quality in Services and Programs

8. What other areas could be included in the Social Compact?

Thank you for your input. It will help us continue to improve the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector.

9. Any final comments?

Appendix C: The Joint Community Government Reference Group

The Joint Community Government Reference Group (JCGRG) is a consultative mechanism that provides strategic advice on critical issues that affect government and non-government agencies in the human services sector.

The Group was formed to examine and respond to the recommendations of the Poverty Taskforce. The Terms of Reference were updated once that task was completed in 2005 and it was recognised that community/government liaison was necessary for future effective work on particular issues under the Social Compact. The Terms of Reference were reviewed in 2009 and given context in a single document covering not only the TOR but also the functions of the group, membership, operational procedures, code of conduct and conflict of interest declarations.

Terms of Reference⁹

The Terms of Reference for the Joint Community Government Reference Group are to:

1. Monitor and provide strategic advice to the ACT Government on:
 - a. implementation of The Social Compact;
 - b. key objectives and future directions of *Building Our Community* - The Canberra Social Plan; and
 - c. community sector viability issues.
2. Maintain linkages / communication with the community inclusion program at the Chief Minister's Department in relation to social and sustainability policy issues affecting the community and the community sector.
3. Inform the implementation of the above through ongoing engagement with stakeholders.

Membership

JCGRG comprises representatives from ACT Community Organisations and Peak Networks and Executive Directors of ACT Government Departments with a social and community perspective.

Members are appointed as representatives of their networks not as individuals.

Current ACT Community Organisation/Peak Network Membership:

ACT Council of Social Service; Youth Coalition of the ACT; Mental Health Community Coalition ACT; ACT Shelter; Regional Community Services; Conservation Council of the Southern East Region and Canberra; Health Care Consumers Association; Council of the Ageing; Volunteering ACT; National Disability Service (ACT Division) and Ministerial Advisory Council on Women.

Current Government Membership:

Relevant government departments are represented at the Senior Executive Level.

Disability, Housing and Community Services; Chief Minister's Department; ACT Health; Education and Training; ACT Treasury; Territory and Municipal Services; Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water are represented on the group.

⁹ JCGRG July 2009