

Meredith Hunter MLA
ACT Greens Parliamentary Convenor
ACT Legislative Assembly

Via email

Dear Ms Hunter,

As per ACTCOSS correspondence of December 2010 to Minister Burch, (cced to yourself and Mrs Dunne available on the ACTCOSS website - http://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Policy_docs.html#2) ACTCOSS is supportive of a centralised checking system that provides consistent and additional protection to vulnerable people in the ACT as proposed by the Working With Vulnerable People Checking System, due to be debated in the Assembly this sitting period.

Since mid 2009 ACTCOSS has been involved in detailed discussions around the introduction of this Working With Vulnerable People Checking System. These discussions have been productive and we are supportive of the scheme coming in to being. The dialogue between government and community has resulted in some significant and important modifications to the scheme, which will ensure the enhanced working of the scheme.

ACTCOSS sees the addition of the Multi-Disciplinary Panel (through legislative amendment announced by Minister Burch last week) as a significant and positive step and helps balance the legislation between the needs of workers and the rights of vulnerable people accessing services.

However ACTCOSS is aware there is still concern from some parts of the community sector about the legislation, and we acknowledge the proposed checking system will have a significant impact on ACT community organisations. As the consultation on the scheme has been productive to date, we believe ongoing dialogue on the guidelines associated with scheme will address many of the remaining concerns. Minister Burch has indicated her willingness for ongoing dialogue as the scheme is rolled out.

As noted previously sufficient support and training will need to be made available for all organisations as they support staff and volunteers to undertake the checks, in the ongoing implementation of the scheme, and to meet the goal of implementing best practice for 'child safe and child friendly' organisations. Such training needs to be delivered in a way that is cognisant and respectful of the broad diversity of organisations and individuals who work with vulnerable people. We understand the ACT Government is supportive of such an approach.

We will continue to advocate for additional risk management processes, procedures and community education campaigns to offer the highest possible protection to vulnerable people in our community. Work has been undertaken in other jurisdictions, including NSW and QLD to support organisations develop practices that encourage the development of 'child safe and child friendly' organisations. ACTCOSS would be supportive of

similar programs being available in the ACT. We understand the ACT Government recognises the importance of such education programs.

A consistent scheme, as offered by the WWVPC scheme, will have benefits in providing clarity for organisations working with children and adults who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

I can be contacted by email if you wish to discuss the issues raised above further.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roslyn Dundas', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Roslyn Dundas
Director

28 March 2011