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ACT Council of Social Service Inc.

COSSA

Invest Budget Surplus in a More Equitable Canberra

The ACT Council of Social Service has welcomed the Chief Minister's announcement that the Government is considering further spending in high priority areas for the community, due to the unexpected size of the current year's budget surplus.

In releasing the Council's submission to the Government on the 2008-09 Budget, Ara Cresswell, the Director of ACTCOSS, called on the Government to use the forecast Budget surplus to invest in a more equitable community.

"Canberrans have a strong community spirit," said Ms Cresswell. "They are generous with their time in volunteering to help those who need it. They are proud to live in a community which rallies and supports people in difficulty. They will expect the Government to give due priority to bridging the gap between the haves and have-nots – to create a more equitable Canberra."

Ms Cresswell went on to say that despite Canberra's apparent affluence, it remains true that one in twelve Canberrans live in poverty, and one in six Canberra households depend on government support as their main source of income. "These are the people who most suffer in terms of insecure housing, financial stress, poor access to health services, transport and crisis support", added Ms Cresswell. "Despite some additional spending in the last Budget, investment in some critical areas – for example public housing and homelessness services - has remained stagnant or gone backwards."

"Many Canberrans depend on community organisations for support. Yet the community sector itself is struggling for want of funds," said Ms Cresswell. "Many have not recovered from the drastic cuts of the 2006-07 Budget. Community organisations are crucial to maintaining Canberra's social fabric, and ACTCOSS calls on the Government to invest in strengthening them" concluded Ms Cresswell.

The ACTCOSS Budget submission can be downloaded from the ACTCOSS website at www.actcoss.org.au

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