

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVERNMENT FAILS TO PRIORITISE VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Responding to the 2009-10 ACT Budget, ACTCOSS Director Roslyn Dundas has expressed concern for Canberrans experiencing disadvantage. "This Budget fails to address the increasing pressure on community organisations as a result of the financial crisis and has raised significant concerns about long term funding for the sector."

"We knew this was going to be a tough budget, but with unemployment looking to increase to 3.5% the community sector needs to be resourced to meet the already increasing demand for emergency relief, homelessness services and family counselling."

"A major concern is the indexation level for community sector funding agreements. The significant drop in indexation from 4% in 2008-09 to 3.15% in this year's budget equates to significant contraction across the community sector." Ms Dundas commented. "This will place increasing stress upon service provision to people experiencing disadvantage and make it more difficult for organisations to provide staff with adequate wages and conditions."

"While the Government has emphasised there would not be cuts in this year's budget, continuation of funding was not provided for programs such as the Community Inclusion Fund, cutting services like the Multicultural Youth Service, needed by the community."

Ms Dundas also noted "The Government has failed to allocate extra resources for the operation of the ACT Prison or support and services for prisoners in the community, putting at risk its commitment to rehabilitation and reducing recidivism."

"One of the few positive initiatives to come out of the Budget is the fulfilment of the Government's election promise of \$14.5 million allocated to mental health services in the community, 50% of which will go to community sector mental health services. We also welcome the \$300,000 allocated to Legal Aid for the provision of legal services to older people and people experiencing homelessness."

"We look forward to discussing these concerns with the Treasurer and Chief Minister at the ACT Community Sector Budget Forum, from 12pm at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre on Wednesday 6 May."

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