

MEDIA RELEASE

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HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL?

The ACT Council of Social Service today released a report on the first five years of the ACT Human Rights Act, its impact on the community sector and those living with disadvantage. The report makes 12 recommendations to improve the Act and build a true human rights culture here in the ACT. The report is being provided to Government for consideration as part of the Attorney-General's mandated review of the Act – due before the end of the June 2009.

"It is often the people who are experiencing the most hardship and disadvantage whose human rights are most at risk. ACTCOSS is concerned by the failure of the ACT Government to engage with many of these groups in their review of the Act," commented Roslyn Dundas, Director of ACTCOSS.

"ACTCOSS recognises important role of the Human Rights Act in helping to promote and protect the fundamental dignity of all members of the community. We are proud to be part of a community that adopted such ground-breaking legislation. However we are concerned the ACT Government's approach to building a human rights culture remains a legalistic one, based only on the enactment of the legislation. Building a human rights culture in the ACT requires understanding, adoption and utilisation by the community."

"For many Canberrans experiencing disadvantage, it is the rights to housing, health, education and an adequate standard of living that are not being recognised and fulfilled. The review of the Human Rights Act must reconsider inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights."

The submission recommends an increase in training and education about human rights for the general community, the community sector and ACT Government officials, and more access to advocates and support for people whose rights have been breached. "A failure to increase resources for training, education and information about human rights in the ACT will indicate a lack of commitment on the part of the ACT Government to creating an active, vibrant human rights culture in the ACT" Ms Dundas concluded.

**For copies of the report or more information
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