

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACT

ACT Council of Social Service Inc.

COSSA

Closing the Gap –not in this Budget!

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) is concerned by the lack of funding invested in the 'closing the gap' initiative and supporting Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

"Just last week the Chief Minister announced his commitment to 'closing the gap' and improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal people in the ACT. Yet the initiatives in this Budget are woefully inadequate if we are to make real head-way," commented Roslyn Dundas, Director of ACTCOSS.

"The Budget papers themselves also show a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people receiving support for Child Protection or other services – yet there are no significant initiatives in this Budget to meet this need. We can't continue to wait until things reach crisis before we intervene."

"Following a 2009 estimates style consultation with ACT Government department heads, the ACT Indigenous Elected Body tabled a report identifying key areas for action. There are six priorities for funding of policy and programs identified by the ACT Elected Body, which were directly related to closing the gap between Aboriginal Peoples and other Australians. The areas included health, housing and children's services. It is disappointing, that despite this work, none of these areas have received targeted funding in the 2010-11 Budget."

"There is welcome funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Access to Justice project. However funding for one Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the AFP does not compare to the funding provided for 16 new Police Officers. Less than \$50,000 per year has been allocated to this important liaison position, raising questions around the operation of this initiative." Ms Dundas concluded.

**For more information or comment please contact Roslyn Dundas
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