

strategic plan

ACTCOSSA
THE ASSOCIATION OF
TOWN AND COUNTRY COUNCILS

2006-2008



introduction

Foreword from the President

I am pleased to introduce the ACTCOSS Strategic Plan for 2006-2008. The plan has been developed by the ACTCOSS General Committee and Staff. We have been informed by our continuing engagement with members.

The plan aims to provide:

- A strategic framework for the work of the General Committee;
- A way of ordering the information we receive and setting effective work priorities; and
- A way of measuring the effectiveness of General Committee and Staff activities.

At a time when the community sector is increasingly being asked to deliver innovative human services, the role of ACTCOSS as the peak representative body

will be crucial to effective social planning. At a time when governments are transferring welfare functions to the community, the role of ACTCOSS in supporting community organisations will be essential to the quality of our sector. At a time when our experience of social belonging is strongly influenced by affluence or poverty, the role of ACTCOSS in raising public awareness of the growing wealth gap will be vital to the future well-being of our whole community.

On behalf of the ACTCOSS General Committee and Staff, we look forward to working with others in the community who share our vision and to reporting to our members and stakeholders on the progress that we have made towards achieving the goals set out in this Strategic Plan.

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Robin Brown

Acknowledgement of Ngunnawal people

ACTCOSS acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered as a result of European settlement. We celebrate the Ngunnawal people's living culture and their contribution to the ACT community.

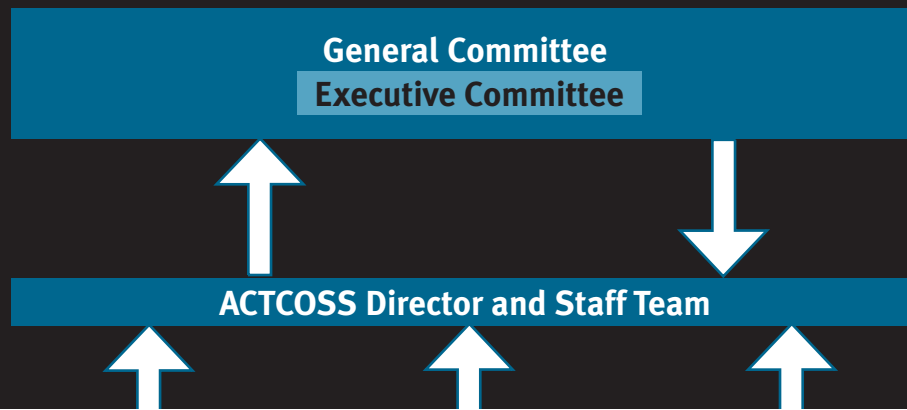
about ACTCOSS

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for community organisations providing services and support for low-income households and people experiencing disadvantage in the Australian Capital Territory. ACTCOSS has been an independent voice for the ACT community for over 40 years.

ACTCOSS is a membership-based organisation, with a diverse and growing membership that includes other peak bodies, advocacy and consumer groups, service providers, mutual support and self-help groups as well as individuals.

Our day-to-day activities are financially supported by the ACT Government, along with the financial and in-kind support we receive from members, individual supporters and the private sector.

ACTCOSS Membership



Strategic direction is provided by the General Committee comprised of respected leaders from the community sector, including those who manage service delivery organisations and represent consumer interests. Staff are drawn from a wide range of back grounds and contribute their broad skills and knowledge to the social policy and sector development work of ACTCOSS. This work is also sustained by the talents, expertise and commitment of numerous community-based networks.



**Community
Sector Forums
and Seminars**

**Advisory
Committees**

**Consultations
and Sector
Development
work**

ACT Community Sector

ACTCOSS structure

our vision

To live in a community that respects and values the diversity of its residents and actively encourages collaborations that will eliminate injustice, inequity and social exclusion.



Our Purpose

We work for change that improves the lives of people experiencing disadvantage by:

- supporting direct consumer input into decision-making processes in the public, community and private sectors;
- developing and promoting equitable social and economic policy; and,
- influencing the quality and impact of social programs and services.

We also work to strengthen the community sector by:

- representing the needs of our member organisations to executive, legislative and bureaucratic arms of government and to the broader public;
- advocating for change that guarantees the future viability and effectiveness of the community sector; and,
- supporting networks and providing services that contribute to the development of good governance, management and practice in the sector.

Our Goals

All our work is directed towards three strategic outcomes.

- A community in which all people have the opportunities and resources they need to participate in and benefit from social and economic life.
- A dynamic, collaborative and sustainable community sector.
- A peak body strengthened by a diverse membership and an active engagement with the groups we represent.

The achievement of these goals is only possible if ACTCOSS maintains high standards for our own governance, development and management.

Our Values

ACTCOSS is guided by values that shape our vision:

- Indigenous culture and heritage – recognising the unique connection of Indigenous people to this place;
- justice and equity – a framework for action and planning in the ACT community;
- respect for diversity – reflecting the nature of the ACT population;
- non-discrimination – the foundation of equitable treatment;
- collaboration and partnership – the strength of our community;
- open and constructive communication – the means to share knowledge and views; and,
- learning and continuous improvement – the source of innovation in everyday practice.

future challenges

The majority of people in Canberra enjoy quality education, economic security and good health. Current public policy frameworks that support human rights and social planning encourage the belief that many of the central tenets of social justice will be acknowledged by Government decision-makers.

This broad social and political context can make it difficult to highlight the growing disadvantage and isolation that some Canberrans face as basic costs for housing, food and energy rise while the level of basic wages and income support remains relatively constant. Against a global backdrop of injustice, unpredictable violence and natural catastrophes it can be difficult to mobilise attention on local social concerns. This represents a major challenge for ACTCOSS.

Other critical challenges are:

- moderating the prominent focus on economic growth and promoting social equity and cohesion as community goals;
- challenging policies and ideas that undermine collaboration and cohesion between the diverse groups in the community;
- achieving resources and recognition for community-based work that will ensure the long-term viability of the sector;
- working constructively with the ACT Government while continuing to challenge and influence policy; and,
- working with the national COSS network to raise awareness of the impact of the federal government's reform agenda on people experiencing disadvantage.





Leadership

the courage and vision to motivate others to support social justice.

Public profile and visibility

a strong reputation for speaking out with messages that touch the hearts and minds of people in the community, including decision-makers.

Investing in relationships

developing collaborations with others to affect change.

Credible policy and advocacy

using robust and ethical processes for research, consultation and analysis leading to the development of well-informed policy.

Listening

ongoing development of effective ways to engage with and hear from people who face hardship, social isolation and discrimination.

Recognised expertise

a perspective which is sought out and respected by Government, the media and key groups in the community sector.

Non-partisan approach

achieving balance and transparency in our engagement with government and political parties.

Accountability

openness in our dealings with consumers, members and the community sector and responsible use of government funds.

Keys to our success

strategic priorities 2006 – 2008

Goal 1

- A community in which all people have the opportunities and resources they need to participate in and benefit from social and economic life.

Priorities

- Expanding the availability of affordable housing and reducing homelessness.
- Promoting a human rights culture across all areas of human service provision in the ACT.
- Addressing the social basis of health risks through early intervention and improved access to health services.
- Building strong relationships and working with Indigenous communities, organisations and networks to address the specific disadvantage faced by Indigenous people.

Goal 2

- A dynamic, collaborative and sustainable community sector.

Priorities

- Strengthening the capacity of the community sector by advocating for improved employment conditions and workforce development, in addition to appropriate infrastructure and improved facilities.
- Growing the resource base of the sector to meet community needs and support the sector's capacity to meet quality standards in service delivery.
- Building collaboration and alliances for change within the sector and facilitating more partnerships between the community, public and private sectors.

Goal 3

- A well governed and managed peak body, representing a strong and diverse membership, and actively engaged with the groups we represent.

Priorities

- Demonstrating strong leadership in policy development, advocacy and sector development.
- Refining communication, engagement and accountability measures for members and other key stakeholders.
- Achieving a more sustainable funding base and diversifying sources of income.
- Regularly reviewing the quality of management and governance processes and being a fair and good practice employer.

performance review, evaluation & feedback

This Strategic Plan will guide ACTCOSS activities over the next three year period (2006-2008) and will be complemented by a set of internal planning and reporting processes.

Work plans are developed by staff drawing on the strategic framework outlined. These plans prioritise work activity and set performance targets and related indicators.

It is the role of the General Committee to review and evaluate the work of ACTCOSS against its strategic objectives. Staff provide written reports to the General Committee on a monthly basis and present reviewed work plans regularly. Progress towards the strategic goals will be reviewed by the General Committee yearly.

Performance review and feedback is also provided by a number of advisory groups or committees that ACTCOSS establishes and supports from time to time. These groups provide specialist guidance and valuable feedback on ACTCOSS' work.

ACTCOSS distributes an annual survey to its membership and welcomes additional feedback by other means throughout the year.



ACTCOSS strategic plan 2006-2008

