

Priorities for service delivery in the 2002-2003 ACT Budget

Report Number 1

Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity

April 2002

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory



Committee membership

Mr John Hargreaves MLA (Chair)

Ms Roslyn Dundas MLA (Deputy Chair)

Mrs Helen Cross MLA

Secretary: Ms Judith Henderson

Administration: Mrs Judy Moutia

Resolution of appointment

(1) The following general purpose standing committees be established and each committee to inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community: ...

(e) a Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity to examine municipal, family and youth services, services for older persons, housing, poverty, children at risk and multicultural and indigenous affairs;¹ ...

¹ Legislative Assembly for the ACT, *Minutes of Proceedings, No 2*, Fifth Assembly, p 12.

Terms of reference

Inquire into and report on priority issues for service delivery to be considered in the 2002-2003 ACT Budget in the areas of:

- municipal services
- family and youth services
- services for older persons
- housing
- services for people in poverty
- programs for the multicultural community
- services for the indigenous community

with particular reference (but not limited) to:

- the adequacy of resources provided to meet current needs
- gaps in services
- any duplication of services and areas identified for re-prioritisation.

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1. Introduction

Background

1.1. On 20 December 2001, the Treasurer wrote to the committee inviting it to participate in the consultation process for the 2002-2003 Budget. The letter also indicated that a budget consultation document would be provided in early to mid February 2002.

1.2. On 31 January 2002, the committee received a briefing from the Treasurer relating to the budget consultation process for 2002-2003. At that briefing it became clear that the Treasurer's budget consultation document would not be available until much later than indicated in the Treasurer's letter.²

1.3. However, the committee decided to participate in the process.

1.4. On 7 March 2002, the Treasurer presented to the Assembly the following paper - *Commission of Audit - the State of the Territory 31 October 2001*. This paper related to the Commission of Audit's first term of reference - the financial results and position at the end of October 2001 and outlined the Territory's financial position at the end of the term of the previous Government.

1.5. On 28 March 2002, the Treasurer released *2002-2003 Budget Consultation*. This document provides details on the ACT economy and current financial position.

1.6. *2002-2003 Budget Consultation* also invites community input about a range of issues. Unfortunately the document was made available far too late for its content to be considered by community organisations participating in the committee's inquiry.

1.7. The committee wishes the Assembly to note that it considers the committee's role to be part of the consultation phase of budget development, not part of the evaluation of the budget proposed by Government. This will come at a later date.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.8. The committee advertised the inquiry in *The Canberra Times* and *The Chronicle* in early February 2002. In addition, letters inviting input were sent to 55 organisations expected to have an interest in the inquiry.

1.9. A total of 26 submissions were received from a wide cross section of the community.

1.10. The committee conducted public hearings on 21 March 2002 and on 28 March 2002. Details of those who appeared are at Appendix 3.

1.11. The committee wishes to thank all who participated in this inquiry.

² Transcript p 3.

2. Priorities for service delivery

2.1. This chapter outlines the major issues raised as priorities for service delivery in the 2002-2003 Budget.

2.2. The committee saw its role in this process as one of drawing to the Government's attention the issues raised by the participating organisations.

2.3. The committee did not see its role to be one of recommending funding for particular organisations.

2.4. However to ensure that those organisations requesting funding have their requests considered by the Government, the committee has forwarded a copy of all submissions it received to the Treasurer.

2.5. This was done not only to ensure that full details were made available to the Treasurer, but more importantly to ensure that individual applications for funding were received by the Treasurer. The committee was most concerned to hear from one organisation (Volunteering ACT Inc) that they were told by departmental officials to submit their application for a renewal of core funding to the committee.³ Had the committee not become aware of the situation, this organisation may have been overlooked and faced with a long and tortuous process to have its funding restored or been forced to close its doors. The committee considers it most unsatisfactory that officials are not able to accurately advise community organisations about how to go about securing or renewing core funding.

2.6. A number of issues relating to needs of the indigenous community were raised. The committee acknowledges that these issues were not raised by indigenous organisations, rather by organisations with an interest in the well being of the indigenous community.

Housing issues

2.7. Housing was seen as the greatest priority for the 2002-2003 Budget. The availability of secure and affordable housing is critical to reducing poverty. Lack of appropriate housing can impact on every other aspect of a person's life. Housing was raised as a major issue in 12 of the submissions received and by the majority of witnesses at the public hearings.⁴

2.8. The most frequently raised issues related to affordability, the future of community and public housing, the need for an independent central housing referral service, housing for the indigenous community, and the need for reporting of housing issues to be through separate reporting on community and public housing outcomes.

³ Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 28 March 2002, p 6.

⁴ Submissions 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23.

Affordability

2.9. Having access to secure and affordable housing is a pre-requisite for meaningful participation in economic and social activity and critical in reducing poverty.

2.10. Those addressing the issue of affordable housing called for:

- independent funding to support the Affordable Housing Task Force to ensure that essential Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement funds are used to address the most urgent need;⁵
- increased funding and support of non-profit accommodation providers to enable them to meet costs and remove the need for tenants to make down payments and/or pay bonds;⁶
- the reversal of the policy of including the income of residents under the age of 25 who are in full or part time study when calculating rental rebates for public housing;⁷
- a reduction of the housing affordability criteria currently set at 40 per cent of a person's income;⁸
- the provision of subsidies or borrowing options for people on low incomes to assist them to meet the cost of private accommodation;⁹
- an investigation by the Affordability Task Force into new housing strategies in the context of the new tax system and new funding arrangements for housing;¹⁰
- an increase in the level and mix of public housing stock to ensure that housing is available to those on low incomes;¹¹
- public and community housing not be marginalised into outer and cheaper areas as this will deprive people of established support networks.¹²

2.11. The committee notes that the Affordability Task Force is yet to report and expects that it will make a number of recommendations relating to measures to

⁵ Submission 1, ACTCOSS; Submission 13, ACT Shelter.

⁶ Submission 1, ACTCOSS.

⁷ Submission 1, ACTCOSS; Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge and Toora Women Inc; Submission 16, Toora Women Inc.

⁸ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge and Toora Women Inc; Submission 16, Toora Women Inc.

⁹ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge and Toora Women Inc; Submission 16, Toora Women Inc; Submission 18, YWCA of Canberra.

¹⁰ Submission 17, Welfare Rights and Legal Centre Limited.

¹¹ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge and Toora Women Inc; Submission 16, Toora Women Inc; Submission 17, Welfare Rights and Legal Centre Limited; Submission 18, YWCA of Canberra.

¹² Submission 22, North Canberra Community Council Inc.

improve affordability. Funding needs to be provided in the 2002-2003 Budget for the implementation of these recommendations so that further delays in addressing the issues are avoided.

Recommendation 1

2.12. The committee recommends that in finalising the 2002-2003 ACT Budget, the Government ensure that funds are allocated for the implementation of recommendations of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Community housing

2.13. The committee was told that funding levels for community housing are not separately identified in the budget papers.¹³ This obviously creates a deal of uncertainty for community housing organisations and a lack of transparency.

Recommendation 2

2.14. The committee recommends that the budget papers identify separate allocations for community housing and ACT Housing.

2.15. Differing views were expressed about how community housing stock should be increased. The Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT (CCHOACT) called for the transfer of an additional 150 dwellings during the 2002-2003 financial year through the existing arrangements with Community Housing Canberra Ltd.¹⁴

2.16. ACT Shelter and North Canberra Community Council, on the other hand, while expressing support for growth in community housing, expressed concern about further stock transfers from public housing management as this does nothing to expand the stock of social housing in the ACT.¹⁵

2.17. ACT Shelter also opposed the call by CCHOACT for the transfer of titles to Community Housing Canberra Ltd of dwellings transferred. CCHOACT argued that given the short supply of accommodation is such a critical issue transfer of the titles would enable the community housing sector to provide a net increase in properties. North Canberra Community Council supported the capital purchases of public housing by community organisations and suggested that stock transfers need to be abandoned.¹⁶

¹³ Submission 6, Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT Inc; Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 19.

¹⁴ Submission 6,. Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT Inc.

¹⁵ Submission 13, ACT Shelter.

¹⁶ Submission 22, North Canberra Community Council Inc.

2.18. The committee warns the Assembly that unrestricted transfer of stock from public housing to community housing may have the perception of privatising public housing responsibilities.

2.19. The committee understands that the Government is currently conducting a review of community housing and until that is complete it would be pre-emptive of the committee to comment further.

Housing information service

2.20. ACTCOSS and ACT Shelter supported the creation of an independent, central housing referral service. Such a service would provide:

- referral for emergency housing, public housing, community housing and housing provided by non-profit organisations, to ensure that available housing is allocated in the most equitable manner possible, and barriers to obtaining housing across all categories are fully understood and can be addressed;
- outreach services to promote the participation of particularly marginalised groups such as indigenous people in need of housing options; and
- data collection for the Affordable Housing Task Force and to inform future housing policy development.

2.21. A centralised housing information service would streamline the process for those seeking information on housing options. Care would need to be taken to ensure such a service did not duplicate the roles of other government or community agencies.

Recommendation 3

2.22. The committee recommends that the Government consider the establishment of an independent housing information service when determining priorities for the 2002-2003 Budget.

Housing for the indigenous community

2.23. Two issues were raised in relation to housing for the indigenous community, namely:

- the need to design and develop public housing specifically to meet the needs of the indigenous community and in particular women escaping domestic violence;¹⁷ and
- an appropriation be made to meet the costs of implementing the recommendations of the Indigenous Viability Study.¹⁸

¹⁷ Submission 1, ACTCOSS; Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc.

Crisis accommodation

2.24. Five main issues were raised in relation to crisis accommodation.

Group accommodation model

2.25. The group accommodation model of women's and children's refuges was reported as inappropriate for many clients.¹⁹ Some services have moved to a cluster accommodation model - where a woman and her children are accommodated in a separate self contained space with access to some communal space. Such a model allows for peer support without the endless tension created by having to share living space with other families.²⁰

2.26. To alleviate the unsatisfactory situation created by the group accommodation model, it was recommended that the Government allocate crisis accommodation program (CAP) funds for the remodelling of refuges for women and children to cluster model housing.²¹

Outreach workers

2.27. The need for outreach workers to provide on going support for women who have moved on to independent living after being accommodated in a refuge was highlighted in two submissions as well as at the public hearings.²²

2.28. Of particular concern is the need for outreach workers for indigenous service users, who are highly over represented in SAAP services compared to the their representation in the population.²³ The committee was told that this support would result in better outcomes for these women reducing the need for their return to crisis accommodation thereby freeing up beds for other women in crisis.²⁴

Crisis accommodation for couples

2.29. There are instances where couples require crisis accommodation, for example in cases of elder abuse. The committee heard that there is nowhere for people in this situation to go apart from a motel, which is often out of reach of people in such a crisis.²⁵ Of course the other option would be to separate a couple and send one to a

¹⁸ Submission 6, Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT Inc.

¹⁹ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc; Submission 21, Society of St Vincent de Paul.

²⁰ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc.

²¹ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc.

²² Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc; Submission 16, Toora Women Inc.

²³ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Toora Women Inc.

²⁴ Submission 16, Toora Women Inc.

²⁵ Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 40, p 55.

women's refuge and one to a men's - a most unsatisfactory situation for a couple in crisis.

Men's shelter for the Southside

2.30. The Society of St Vincent de Paul called for the establishment of a men's shelter on the Southside, similar to Samaritan House.²⁶

Youth refuges for Belconnen and Gungahlin

2.31. At present there are no youth refuges in Belconnen or Gungahlin. Yet these two areas have a large youth population. The only youth refuge in the north side of Canberra is the Canberra Youth Refuge. If a young person from any suburb north of the lake is unable to be accommodated at the Canberra Youth Refuge, they will need to seek accommodation at a refuge in possibly Tuggeranong, a great distance from their home and school.

2.32. The Government's attention is drawn to the debate on 12 December 2001 when this issue was raised in the Assembly.²⁷

The community sector

2.33. A strong and viable community sector is critical to the Territory.

2.34. The community sector claims that it is under-funded and under-resourced in terms of accommodation.

2.35. Several organisations reported that the sustainability of community services is under threat from the increasingly complex and costly legal and regulatory environment, and from the lack of funding for indirect costs of service provision that result from the current purchaser provider arrangements.²⁸ These indirect costs include increasing insurance costs, compliance with contractual reporting requirements, occupational health and safety and the introduction of changes to the Social and Community Services (SACS) award. Another cost reported by Volunteering ACT is the cost of police checks. This can be considerable.²⁹

2.36. The other major area of concern to the community sector is accommodation. Many community organisations operate out of old and unsafe buildings, use second hand furniture and survive with computers and technology that is outdated.³⁰

2.37. Community organisations that provide services need to be located in easily accessible locations, with good street frontage and close to transport.

²⁶ Submission 21, Society of St Vincent De Paul.

²⁷ Debates of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT, Fifth Assembly, No 1, pp 181-188.

²⁸ For example - Submission 1, ACTCOSS; Submission 10, Youth Coalition of the ACT; Submission 11, Volunteering ACT Inc; Submission 18, YWCA of Canberra.

²⁹ Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 28 March 2002, p 12.

³⁰ Submission 11, Volunteering ACT Inc; Submission 18, YWCA of Canberra.

2.38. ACTCOSS called on the Government to develop a plan for development and redevelopment of accommodation for community services across the ACT. Such a plan would involve the allocation of considerable funding for the 2002-2003 Budget and in out years.

2.39. The committee considers that both the accommodation and funding issues for community services need to be addressed urgently.

Recommendation 4

2.40. The committee recommends that the Government:

- **ensure the 2002-2003 Budget funds the community sector adequately for indirect costs; and**
- **fund the development and implementation of a plan for community services.**

Reducing financial inequality

Concessions and rebates

2.41. ACTCOSS proposed the following concerning concession and rebates:³¹

- government concessions and rebates be made more flexible, and be increased to provide support for people living with poverty, and those making the transition out of poverty;
- the review of concessions and rebates commenced in August 2001 be continued, with further community input, with a view to implementation in the 2002-2003 financial year.

Progressive taxation

2.42. ACTCOSS proposed that:³²

- the Government implement a community based review of tax revenue raising, focussing on progressiveness, equality and increased revenue;
- stamp duty windfall gains be used specifically to attack poverty and disadvantage in the ACT in the 2002-03 Budget.

Financial services

2.43. ACTCOSS proposed that:³³

³¹ Submission 1, ACTCOSS.

³² Submission 1, ACTCOSS.

- the Government provide funding for the increased availability of low cost financial advice for people on low and fixed incomes.

Junior Secondary Bursary Scheme

2.44. The Smith Family proposed the amalgamation of the ACT Junior Secondary Bursary Scheme, administered by the Department of Education and Community Services, with the Smith Family Learning for Life Program. The Learning for Life Program offers not only financial support but also ongoing support provided by trained/qualified team workers. The Smith Family is of the view that the ACT community would receive better value for money by transferring the bursary scheme to the Smith Family where students would also receive ongoing support.³⁴

Community services

2.45. A number of organisations submitted applications for funding for their organisation to enable them to provide additional community services or in some cases to enable them to continue their services. The committee was not in a position to assess the relative merits of these applications, however has forwarded all submissions to the Government and asks the Government to consider them.

2.46. Planning of community services was raised as an issue that needs to be addressed. As part of the development of a social plan ACTCOSS and the Belconnen Community Service called for a process of planning and funding community services that is open and transparent, that targets where the need is greatest and that involves the stakeholders, the Government, the consumers and the providers of those services.³⁵ According to ACTCOSS funding the delivery of community services is based on historical factors.³⁶

2.47. Unmet need identified during the inquiry included:

- advocacy services for disadvantaged people who are unable to independently defend their rights;³⁷
- English classes for migrants and refugees ineligible for the Commonwealth funded Adult Migrant English Program;³⁸
- face to face crisis counselling;³⁹
- family support programs;⁴⁰

³³ Submission 1, ACTCOSS.

³⁴ Submission 2, The Smith Family.

³⁵ Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 6, p 30.

³⁶ Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 6.

³⁷ Submission 1, ACTCOSS.

³⁸ Submission 4, Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan.

³⁹ Submission 9, Lifeline.

⁴⁰ Submission 12, Belconnen Community Service; Submission 23, Canberra and Queanbeyan ADD Support Group; Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 44.

- behaviour management support for families with children aged 0 to 16 where the child/ren have challenging behaviours;⁴¹
- programs for children aged 5 to 12 practising unsafe behaviours and/or with mental health issues;⁴²
- support for young indigenous people to enable participation as volunteers;⁴³
- counselling services for adults who are survivors of sexual violence;⁴⁴
- support workers for indigenous children to provide early intervention to prevent the cycle of violence and dysfunction;⁴⁵
- support for families with a child/ren with a disability;⁴⁶
- support and training for the volunteer workforce;⁴⁷
- community information services;⁴⁸
- support services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the rapidly ageing population, particularly in Woden and Tuggeranong;⁴⁹
- resources to enable some small organisations to consult with their membership and participate in consultative forums;⁵⁰
- family and community services and facilities for West Belconnen;⁵¹
- support for people subject to elder abuse.⁵²

⁴¹ Submission 12, Belconnen Community Service; Submission 19, Tuggeranong Community Service; Submission 23, Canberra and Queanbeyan ADD Support Group. .

⁴² Submission 8, Northside Community Service; Submission 12, Belconnen Community Service.

⁴³ Submission 11, Volunteering ACT Inc.

⁴⁴ Submission 14, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

⁴⁵ Submission 15, Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Toora Women Inc.

⁴⁶ Submission 5, ACT Down Syndrome Association; Submission 23 Attention Deficit Support Group of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc.

⁴⁷ Submission 11, Volunteering ACT.

⁴⁸ Community Information and Referral Service, copy of correspondence to the ACT Treasurer dated 8 February 2002.

⁴⁹ Submission 19, Tuggeranong Community Service; Submission 24, Woden Valley Community Council.

⁵⁰ Submission 11, Volunteering ACT Inc.

⁵¹ Submission 25, Mr Roger Nicoll; Submission 26, Canberra Christian Life Centre.

⁵² Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 21 March 2002, p 39, p 50.

Children and young people

Care and protection

2.48. Concerns about the resourcing of the care and protection system continue to be raised. The committee heard from the Youth Coalition of the ACT that there are serious staff shortages in Family Services, that children and young people are being subjected to multiple placements and to continuous changes in case worker.⁵³

2.49. Other issues raised in relation to care and protection included:⁵⁴

- the need for funding for indigenous agencies to resource preventative programs aimed at supporting indigenous families;
- an increase in funding for Marlow Cottage to enable upgrading of basic facilities and the continuation of current programs;
- an increase in funding for CREATE Foundation of the ACT to allow the employment of one full-time position to support children and young people in foster and substitute care; and
- funding for an independent review of the effectiveness of 'out of home' care options and successful alternative models for young people in the care and protection system.

Youth night shelter

2.50. The need for a night shelter for young people has been raised in the budget context in previous years and was raised again this year. It is seen as a very high priority by the Youth Coalition of the ACT.⁵⁵

Youth Centre for North Canberra

2.51. Northside Community Service presented a proposal for the establishment of a youth centre in North Canberra. It argued that such a service is warranted because of the high proportion of young people in the area (the highest of any area in Canberra) and to fill a gap in the services provided in an integrated way by the organisation.⁵⁶

Youth justice

2.52. Budget issues raised concerning youth justice included:⁵⁷

⁵³ Uncorrected Proof Transcript 21 March 2002, p 29.

⁵⁴ Submission 10, Youth Coalition of the ACT.

⁵⁵ Uncorrected Proof Transcript 21 March 2002, p 34.

⁵⁶ Submission 8, Northside Community Service; Uncorrected Proof Transcript 21 March 2002, p 78-79.

⁵⁷ Submission 10, Youth Coalition of the ACT.

- funding for the youth sector to research a model which would best meet the legal needs of young people;
- additional resources for the development and provision of alternative sentencing options and diversionary programs; and
- an increase in resources for the investigation and implementation of best practice post-release models for young people exiting Quamby Youth Detention Centre.

Municipal services

2.53. The following matters relating to municipal services which come under the responsibility of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity were raised.

Community Centre for Kippax

2.54. The Kippax Task Force requested that funds be set aside for the design of a multi-purpose community facility at Kippax. This facility would include a new library.⁵⁸ The committee notes that funds were set aside in the 2001-2002 Budget for a feasibility study into the services and functions delivered through the Kippax Library and the facilities required to meet these requirements.⁵⁹

Library services

2.55. North Canberra Community Council stressed the need for funding for a properly dispersed community accessible public library system. It claimed that recurrent spending on books and journals has substantially declined in recent years.⁶⁰

Skate Park for West Belconnen

2.56. Two participants urged the committee to ensure that funds allocated for a skate park in West Belconnen are retained in the 2002-2003 Budget and that the skate park be located adjacent to the Dream Centre in Charnwood.⁶¹

Conclusion

2.57. The consultation process has drawn attention to many areas of unmet need and a number of gaps in services. A number of issues have been raised in past years and have not yet been addressed. The committee requests that the Government take seriously the issues raised in the submissions and in this report. The issues raised should provide the Government with very helpful information for planning the 2002-2003 and future budgets.

⁵⁸ Submission 20, Kippax Task Force.

⁵⁹ 2001-2002 Budget Paper No 3, p 93.

⁶⁰ Submission 22, North Canberra Community Council.

⁶¹ Submission 25, Mr Roger Nicoll; Submission 26, Canberra Christian Life Centre.

John Hargreaves MLA
Chair
4 April 2002

Appendix 1 - Brief summary of issues raised in submissions

This summary notes issues raised in the submissions that are within the committee's terms of reference. Several organisations presented a submission that covered all the issues they wished to raise about the 2002-2003 Budget. In some cases a copy of the submission was provided to each relevant committee - in other cases committees themselves referred the submission on to the relevant committee.

Submission 1 - ACT Council of Social Service Inc

The submission is based on the theme 'attacking poverty' with three sub themes relevant to the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity namely accessing rights and entitlements; reducing financial inequality; and assuring essential services.

The submission makes the following recommendations.

Accessing rights and entitlements

Raising awareness

- Funding be allocated for a People's Charter to be drawn up, according to the principles recommended by the Poverty Task Group, and that the Charter be used as a basis for community education and prioritisation of service provision.
- Funding be targeted at ensuring community information services and community service providers are able to provide information in a wide range of formats and languages.

Strengthening the community sector

- The Government develop a plan for development and redevelopment of accommodation for community services across the ACT, with considerable investment funding allocated in the 2002-03 year and the out years, particularly taking into account:
 - location with respect to street/ pedestrian frontage;
 - location with respect to geographic/transport accessibility (ie put services accessible to bus exchanges as is the case with commercial services); and
 - the amount of physical space needed for current use and future needs.
- The Government ensure the Central Canberra Community Facilities Strategy recognises the importance that accessible, high-profile locations for community services plays in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society, and prioritises community facilities above profits for commercial developers.

- The Government ensure the ACT Council of Cultural and Community Organisations can be fully involved in the Griffin Centre reconstruction, and effectively represent the needs and requirements of the community sector.
- The Government formally acknowledge and agree to uphold the principles embodied in the Compact between the community sector and the ACT Government published in 2001.
- The Government meet the undertakings as outlined in the Compact to ‘recognise the importance of and support the sustainability and long-term capacity of the community sector’. This could be achieved through the development of a Community Services Industry Development Plan.
- The Government allocate funding for co-operative policy development and service planning processes to enable increased consumer and service provider participation. This funding would be used to:
 - enable peaks and other representative bodies to facilitate consumer and service provider participation in consultative processes for planning and policy development, including reimbursement of costs incurred by participants;
 - reimburse consumers and service providers for the costs of representation on government committees and working groups, and pay sitting fees where appropriate.

Reducing financial inequality

Concessions and rebates

- Government concessions and rebates be made more flexible, and be increased to provide support for people living with poverty, and those making the transition out of poverty.
- The review of concessions and rebates commenced in August 2001 be continued, with further community input, with a view to implementation in the 2002-2003 financial year.

Progressive taxation

- The ACT Government implement a community based review of tax revenue raising, focussing on progressiveness, equality and increased revenue.
- Stamp duty windfall gains be used specifically to attack poverty and disadvantage in the ACT in the 2002-03 Budget.

Financial services

- The Government provide funding for the increased availability of low cost financial advice for people on low and fixed incomes.

Assuring essential services

Housing

- Increase funding and support of non-profit accommodation providers to enable them to meet costs and remove the need for tenants to make down payments and/or pay bonds.
- Provide independent funding to support the Affordable Housing Task Force, to ensure that essential Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) funds are used to address the most urgent need.
- Create an independent central housing referral service, which would provide:
 - referral for emergency housing, public housing, community housing and housing provided by non-profit organisations, to ensure that available housing is allocated in the most equitable manner possible, and barriers to obtaining housing across all categories are fully understood and can be addressed;
 - outreach services to promote the participation of particularly marginalised groups such as indigenous people in need of housing options;
 - data collection for the Affordable Housing Task Force and to inform future housing policy development.
- Provide sufficient funds for the expansion of the community development worker program within ACT Housing.
- The Government develop housing policies that reflect the special circumstances of the indigenous population, ie a comprehensive Aboriginal Housing Policy which is informed by the indigenous communities of the ACT and the housing sector.
- The Government design and develop public and community housing aimed directly at indigenous families, particularly where women and children are escaping domestic violence.
- The Government exclude the income of residents under the age of 25 who are in full or part time study, when calculating eligibility for rental rebates.

Advocacy services

- Funds be allocated for a detailed study (conducted jointly by the Government and the sector) into unmet need for advocacy services for disadvantaged people who are unable to independently defend their rights.
- A joint project be undertaken between advocacy groups and the Government to develop quality service standards for advocacy work, based on the principles of the Compact on working relationships between the community sector and government.

Submission 2 - The Smith Family

Argues that the ACT Government Bursary Scheme, currently administered by the Department of Education and Community Services should be amalgamated with the Smith Family Learning for Life program, which it claims would ensure the highest level of success because ongoing support is provided to students by Learning for Life support workers.

Submission 3 - Ms Melissa Parsons

Requests that funding be allocated in the budget to enable ACT Housing to support model tenants who are adversely affected by lease infringements of neighbours. The lease infringements reported were predominately noise related and took two and a half years to resolve. Funding should be provided to implement policy and procedural changes in the following areas:

- to reduce to three months the time taken to permanently resolve situations where problem tenants are having an adverse effect on their neighbours;
- to implement policies and leases that protect model tenants from the adverse effects of neighbours that break lease conditions or pursue illegal activities;
- to ensure that complaints about the effects of a neighbour on individual tenants are taken seriously; and
- to ensure that written advice given by ACT Housing is binding and acted upon.

Submission 4 - Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan

Seeks permanent funding for the *English for Living* and *Home Tutor* programs currently offered by the Migrant Resource Centre.

Some funding is provided through annual Adult and Community Education (ACE) grants administered by the Office of Training and Adult Education.

Due to the demand for the program, more funds are needed - the program has outgrown the ACE funding parameters and needs more funds than ACE can offer.

Annual funding of \$50,000 is requested - \$40,000 for the *Learning for Life* program and \$10,00 for the *Home Tutor* program.

Submission 5 - ACT Down Syndrome Association Incorporated

The Association receives no government funding - it is currently funded through donations from business and service clubs and fund raising.

It is seeking \$75,000 from the 2002-2003 Budget to enable it employ more staff and expand its programs.

Submission 6 - Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT Inc.

The submission focuses on and makes recommendations in five main areas.

The need for an ACT social housing strategy

It recommends that the budget provide resources for the development of an ACT Social Housing Strategy.

Growth of community housing

It recommends that:

- the 2002-03 ACT Budget paper identify the funding level appropriate to community housing in a manner similar to the funding provided to ACT Housing and consistent with the tying of funding under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA);
- the 2002-03 ACT Budget contain a commitment to a transfer of 150 dwellings by June 2003 to the community housing sector through existing arrangements with Community Housing Canberra Ltd;
- such a stock transfer be undertaken to immediately address the issues of lack of capacity within the sector; threats to the financial viability of providers; and the expectations of both providers and prospective tenants that the program would be ongoing;
- any future stock transfers be undertaken within the context of an ACT Social Housing Strategy;
- the 2002-03 ACT Budget commit to a growth strategy for Community Housing through the allocation of a percentage of CSHA funds, commencing with 10% or \$3 million in 2003, progressing incrementally to \$6 million in 2004-05;
- \$250,000 p.a. of Community Housing Program funds be allocated through a Special Purpose Payment within the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement be made available to the Community Housing sector to undertake feasibility studies for development projects, or other projects designed to increase the supply of low income housing;
- that the ACT Government transfer title to the properties already transferred to community management through Community Housing Canberra Ltd.

Future of CCHOACT

It recommends that:

- the 2002-03 ACT Budget increase funding to CCHOACT to enable a comprehensive sector development and policy and advocacy service to be

developed, and that such funding be linked to a triennial agreement with annual reporting on outcomes achieved.

Indigenous housing

It recommends that:

- the ACT Government make an appropriation within the 2002-2003 Budget to meet the costs of recommendations from the Indigenous Viability Study.

Submission 7 - Ian Hay

Claims that there is an increasing crisis developing in the aged care housing area.

Encouragement needs to be given to not-for-profit organisations providing accessible and adaptable aged care housing. Such organisations require no financial commitment from the Government.

Submission 8 - Northside Community Service

North Canberra has the highest percentage of young people in the 15 to 24 age group in the whole of the ACT.

The submission argues for the establishment of a youth specific facility in North Canberra that takes a holistic approach to service delivery. It identifies a number of areas relating to the needs of young people that urgently need addressing in the North Canberra area. These include

- drug and alcohol issues
- females exhibiting highly sexualised behaviours
- family conflict
- bullying and racism
- anger, aggression and violent behaviours
- peer pressure to perform at risk behaviours
- mental health issues
- self harming behaviours
- at risk behaviours displayed by the 8 to 12 year old age group for whom no services are available.

Submission 9 - Lifeline Canberra Inc

Proposes the development of a new service that offers face-to-face crisis counselling in order to meet an identified gap in existing low cost counselling services in Canberra.

Also requests funding to expand the following existing services:

- core services
- Youthline
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and
- Gambling Care services.

Submission 10 - Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition of the ACT made the following of recommendations relating to the terms of reference for the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity.

Commonwealth issues of concern

- The ACT Government enter into discussions with the Commonwealth regarding current mutual obligation systems and the need for a flexible range of government responses beyond the removal of income support, recognising that early intervention is more cost effective.
- The Commonwealth Work-for-the-Dole scheme initiatives be subject to independent review and evaluation.

ACT issues of concern

- The ACT Government provide additional funding to the ACT Youth Coalition to appoint a research officer to research, conduct consultations and develop a model for the establishment of a Commission for Children and Young People in the ACT.
- The ACT Government address the IT needs of community organisations.
- The ACT Government ensure adequate resources are made available in the 2002–2003 Budget to implement the recommendations of the ACT Poverty Task Group.
- The ACT Government enter into a discussion with the Commonwealth for the lifting of the Independent Common Youth Allowance to the same level as the Aged Pension.
- The ACT Government commit to addressing and resourcing the recommendations of both, the Inquiry into Services for Children at Risk in the ACT and Adolescents and Young Adults At Risk of Not Achieving Satisfactory Education and Training Outcomes, that have not been implemented.

Youth employment

- The ACT Government commit to the continued expansion of public sector traineeships with a minimum of 50% to become full-time employment.

- The Job Network scheme and ACT employment initiatives be subject to independent review and evaluation.
- The ACT Government consider the resourcing of a youth specific employment agency that uses a case management approach, performs skills audits and devises long-term career plans with young people.

Youth housing

- The ACT Government urgently consider providing significant increased funding for the provision of social housing in the ACT.
- The ACT Government implement the remaining recommendations of the Youth Housing Taskforce Report.
- An independent research project investigate the number and nature of overnight remands at Quamby and propose measures to address the gaps in accommodation services for these young people.
- The ACT Government identify accommodation options for young people with mental health issues. This could include a partnership model involving a housing agency and adolescent mental health support agencies.

Youth justice

- The ACT Government fund the youth sector to research a model which would best meet the legal needs of young people in the ACT region.
- The ACT Government investigate and implement best practice models of early intervention programs as part of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy.
- the ACT Police Force be trained in youth issues, youth services availability in the ACT and cultural awareness particular to indigenous youth and young people from non-English speaking background.
- The ACT Government support and commit additional resources to the development and provision of alternative sentencing options and diversionary programs.
- An independent review of the Youth Justice Community Unit be resourced to evaluate the effectiveness of service provision to young people.
- The ACT Government commit greater resources to the investigation and implementation of best practice post-release models for young people exiting the Quamby Youth Detention Centre.
- All staff at Quamby gain educational qualifications, of at least a Certificate Level 3 in Youth Work.

Care and protection

- The ACT Government allocate specific funds for indigenous agencies to resource preventative and early intervention programs aimed at supporting indigenous families.
- The ACT Government investigate a comprehensive inquiry into the ACT care and protection system, with a commitment to resourcing emerging recommendations aimed at improving outcomes for the children and young people involved in the system.
- The ACT Government provide additional resources to Marlow Cottage for the upgrading and ongoing maintenance of basic facilities and for the continuance of current programs.
- An independent review be resourced to investigate the effectiveness of current models of 'out of home' care options and successful alternative models for young people in the care and protection system.
- The ACT Government increase funding to the CREATE Foundation of the ACT to allow for the employment of one full-time position.

Youth sector development

- The ACT Government ensure that the \$4 million set aside for community agencies to comply with the terms and conditions of the Social and Community Services (ACT) Award 1995 be distributed as soon as possible.
- The ACT Government build into service funding an incremental adjustment to allow for normal salary adjustments in a consistent manner.
- Youth services receive an adequate level of funding to ensure that employees are able to meet their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1989) and to follow best practice as outlined by the ACT WorkCover (particularly in regard to workplace violence and safety), whilst being able to continue quality service provision, (these guidelines should form part of service purchasing agreements to ensure the health and safety of both employees and clients).
- The ACT Government resource additional identified positions in youth services, at all levels, for indigenous workers and workers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds - this should be supported by a commitment to the provision of cultural awareness training to all staff in youth service agencies on an ongoing basis.
- The ACT Government allocate resources in the 2002-2003 Budget to conduct a feasibility study and cost benefit analysis of the setting up of a standard common insurance policy for organisations contracted to Government and not-for-profit community organisations.

- The ACT Government investigate placing all community facilities with one central asset manager, and that priority be given to developing a strategic asset management plan.

Media representation of young people

- A partnership approach be taken by the ACT Government, the Youth Coalition of the ACT and media organisations (in consultation with young people) to develop a media kit that guides the media in their dealings with young people and the reporting of youth issues.

Young people and public space

- The ACT Government actively consult and involve young people in the identification and design of public space

Submission 11 - Volunteering ACT

Requests funding totalling \$150,000 to enable it to continue and expand its services.

Highlights the following issues for consideration:

- the use of volunteers to assist students at risk;
- support for young indigenous people who wish to volunteer;
- resources to enable small organisations to participate in forums , focus groups ;
- better resourcing for peak organisations.

Submission 12 - Belconnen Community Service

Calls for additional community or public housing to be provided across the ACT.

Identifies the following areas requiring additional funding based on unmet demand for services in Belconnen and data collected from existing services:

- family support
- behaviour support for families with children aged 0 to 16 where the child/ren have challenging behaviours
- sport and recreation programs for children aged 5 to 12 years at risk of unsafe behaviours and mental ill health
- regional planning of services for the Belconnen area.

Submission 13 - ACT Shelter

The submission raises and makes recommendations concerning the following issues.

Affordability Task Force

- An appropriation of funds be made to adequately service the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Maintenance

- The \$2 million diverted from ACT Housing's house purchasing budget in October 2000 in order to meet its Residential Tenancies Act maintenance obligations, be restored.

Appropriateness of dwellings

- ACT Housing formulate and publish, in consultation with its tenants, a comprehensive asset management plan which includes strategies for improving the safety of tenants living on large multi-unit complexes; a clear framework for stock replacement and renewal; and a commitment to continuing strategies that disperse public housing throughout all suburbs of Canberra locationally close to transport and other community facilities.
- The ACT Government investigate strategies to include adaptable design incentives into the planning process.
- ACT Housing ensure that all new building projects undertaken include adaptable standards.
- The ACT Government continue its support for the MBA "Housing for Life" Information Centre and actively promote the principles of adaptable housing.

Consumer protection and tenant participation

- ACT Housing reinstate and expand its tenant participation unit and actively seek to build partnerships with its tenants.
- Funds be allocated to reinstate a consultative residential tenancy law reform process.
- The ACT Government review the effectiveness of the Residential Tenancies Tribunal in relation to the protection that it offers to tenants in the ACT.

Future funding of public housing

- The ACT Government redress the \$1.6 million (ACT contribution) reduction to the Housing Assistance portfolio since 1997/8.

The future of community housing

- Sufficient funding be made available for continuing the community consultation process following the *Community Housing in the ACT – Future Directions* paper.
- The ACT Government not further expand the provision of community housing at the expense of ACT Housing assets.

Emergency and crisis accommodation

Emergency and crisis services be expanded for the following:

- young people in the outer north
- single people needing support
- low income families
- children experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness due to violence.

Housing information service

Funds be allocated for the provision of a central, independent housing information centre.

Submission 14 - Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

Raises the matter of long waiting lists for counselling for adults who are survivors of sexual violence. The wait has increased from 3 months to 5 months in the last year. Survivors of childhood sexual abuse are the main group affected.

Submission 15 - Beryl Women's Refuge, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Toora Women Inc

This submission provides information and makes recommendations on the following issues related to the responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity.

- Indigenous outreach workers need to be attached urgently to existing crisis accommodation services to ensure that continuity of service is provided to indigenous women and women with children and ensuring ongoing outreach support post crisis accommodation. This ongoing support will increase the chance of these service users to achieve and maintain independent living and free up crisis beds for others.
- The ACT Government provide funding for the recommendations from the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Health and Community Care report 'Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT' including the development of public and community housing aimed directly at indigenous

families, particularly where women and children are escaping domestic violence and, the development of a comprehensive Aboriginal Housing Policy.

- Resources be made available to provide a range of services and support workers to indigenous children to ensure early intervention and support.
- SAAP funds be allocated for an Indigenous Adviser position to assist SAAP agencies to better meet the needs of indigenous SAAP clients.

Housing

- ACT Housing review the housing affordability criteria which is currently set at 40 per cent of a person's gross income and reduce it to a more realistic percentage.
- Subsidies be provided to people on low incomes to meet the cost of private rental accommodation.
- The ACT Government exclude the income of residents under the age of 25 who are in full or part-time study when calculating eligibility for rental rebates.
- The level and mix of public housing stock be increased to ensure that housing is available to those on low incomes.

Community services

- Resources be allocated by the ACT Government to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations of the review of services for children and young people who have been sexually abused.
- Resources be allocated to assist the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre to meet the growing demand for counselling for adult survivors of sexual assault.
- Long term counselling and other services be provided for women with ritual abuse issues.
- The ACT Government allocate crisis accommodation program (CAP) funds for the remodelling of refuges for women and children to cluster model housing.

Submission 16 - Toora Women Inc

Describes the services offered and highlights the large increase in turnaway rates at Toora House due to the house being full.

The submission provides information and makes recommendations on the following issues related to the responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity.

Community services

- Funds be allocated for outreach workers attached to crisis accommodation services to facilitate the move into independent living and provide ongoing support when required.
- SAAP and other community services be adequately funded to meet the increase in demand for services.

Housing

- ACT Housing review the housing affordability criteria which is currently set at 40 per cent of a person's gross income and reduce it to a more realistic percentage.
- Subsidies be provided to people on low incomes to meet the cost of private rental accommodation.
- The ACT Government exclude the income of residents under the age of 25 who are in full or part-time study when calculating eligibility for rental rebates.
- The level and mix of public housing stock be increased to ensure that housing is available to those on low incomes.

Submission 17 - Welfare Rights and Legal Centre Limited

The submission provides information and makes recommendations on the following issues related to the responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity.

Public housing

- The Government allocate more funding towards building or purchasing more dwellings to meet the demand for public housing.
- ACT Housing's operating surplus be put towards acquiring new public housing stock.
- The Affordable Housing Task Group, in consultation with the ACT community, investigate new housing strategies in the context of the new tax system and new funding arrangements for housing in the absence of an overarching national housing policy.

Strengthening the infrastructure of community services

- The ACT Government remain committed to maintaining current funding levels for ACT community services and to funding costs associated with the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award.

Submission 18 - YWCA of Canberra

Housing

Raises three issues in relation to housing:

- the need to make available more affordable housing by increasing public and community housing stock; and creating borrowing options for low income people;
- discrimination faced by people on low incomes, single parents, young people, indigenous Australians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in attempting to access the private rental market;
- limited access to crisis accommodation.

Resourcing community services

- Indexing funding by CPI does not cover increases in annual costs such as insurance, SACS award. Service contract increments need to cover these increases.
- Funding is not allocated for community facility management which impacts on the level of service that can be provided.

Submission 19 - Tuggeranong Community Service

Highlights two emerging priorities in the Tuggeranong region, namely:

- support for older people; and
- behavioural management services for children aged 8 to 12.

Submission 20 - Kippax Task Force

Requests the construction of an integrated community facility, including a library, at Kippax - at this stage seeks funds for the design and possibly demolition of an unused building on the proposed site.

Submission 21 - Society of St Vincent de Paul

Requests consideration of two proposals:

- individual unit supported accommodation for women accompanied by children at risk of homelessness; and
- the establishment of a men's shelter on the southside similar to Samaritan House on the north.

Submission 22 - Northside Community Council

Municipal Services

In relation to municipal services, the responsibility of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity the submission makes the following points:

- sites and funding for libraries must be ensured for a properly dispersed and community-accessible library system;
- the system for maintenance of suburban parks needs to be improved.

Housing

In relation to housing the submission makes the following points:

- there needs to be particular reference to access to private housing for older people and people with disabilities;
- the relative distribution of public and community housing should not be marginalised into outlying and cheaper areas;
- concentrations of enclaves of public housing must be avoided;
- there is a flaw in not enabling housing stock to be owned by community housing organisations;
- transfers of housing stock to community housing organisations reduce an already low level of public housing.

Submission 23 - Canberra and Queanbeyan Attention Deficit Disorder Support Group

The submission calls for

- access to behaviour management training for families with a child with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD);
- anger management programs for children and young people with ADHD;
- greater access to family support;
- establishment of youth groups for young people with ADHD.

Submission 24 - Woden Valley Community Council

Raises the need for improved support services and infrastructure to support the needs of a rapidly ageing population in the Woden Valley.

Submission 25 - Mr Roger Nicoll

This submission calls for the provision of increased family and youth facilities in West Belconnen as well as ensuring that the commitment made to allocate \$500,000 in 2002-2003 for a skate park in West Belconnen be maintained.

Submission 26 - Canberra Christian Life Centre

Requests that the funds of \$500,000 allocated for 2002-2003 in the 2001-2002 Budget for a skate park for West Belconnen be retained.

Appendix 2 - Submissions received

1. ACT Council of Social Service Inc
2. The Smith Family
3. Ms Melissa Parsons
4. Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Incorporated
5. ACT Down Syndrome Association
6. Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT Inc
7. Ian C Hay
8. Northside Community Service Inc
9. Lifeline
10. Youth Coalition of the ACT
11. Volunteering ACT
12. Belconnen Community Service
13. ACT Shelter
14. Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
15. Beryl Women's Refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Inanna, Doris Women's Refuge and Toora Women Inc
16. Toora Women Inc
17. Welfare Rights and Legal Centre Limited
18. YWCA of Canberra
19. Tuggeranong Community Service
20. Kippax Task Force
21. Society of St Vincent de Paul
22. North Canberra Community Council Inc
23. Canberra and Queanbeyan ADD Support Group
24. Woden Valley Community Council
25. Mr Roger Nicoll
26. Canberra Christian Life Centre

Appendix 3 - Witnesses at public hearings

21 March 2002

For the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)

Mr Daniel Stubbs, Director

Ms Karen Nicholson, Policy Officer

For the Migrant Resource Centre

Mr Killion Banda, Coordinator

Mrs Sally Emerson, Community Development Officer

For the Coalition of Community Housing Organisations of the ACT

Mr Ken Horsham, Chairperson

Mr Bruce McKenzie, Treasurer

Mrs Ginny Hewlett, Executive Officer

For the Youth Coalition of the ACT

Ms Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer

Ms Alexandra Cahill, Policy and Projects Officer

For the Belconnen Community Service

Ms Margo Mitchell, Executive Director

Ms Jo Bowen, Director Community Services

For the Tuggeranong Community Service

Ms Maureen Cane, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Tony Campbell, Manager Support Link Systems

For the YWCA of Canberra

Ms Kasy Chambers, Executive Director

Ms Leonie Whyte, Policy Officer

Ms Therese Quinn, A/g Program Manager Family Outreach Service

For the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre

Ms Julie Whitmore, Administrator

Mr Eduard Duyvan, Tenants Advice Service

For Lifeline

Ms Marie Bennett, Executive Director

Ms Fiona May, Program Development Officer

For Toora Women, Beryl Women's Refuge, Doris Women's Refuge, Inanna, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

Ms Jacqui Pearce, Executive Director, Toora Women Incorporated

Ms Winsome Willow, Manager, Inanna Incorporated

For Northside Community Service

Mr Stephen Larcombe, CEO

Ms Lynne Parsons, A/g Children, Youth and Family Services Co-ordinator

28 March 2002

For Volunteering ACT Inc

Ms Mary Porter, Chief Executive Officer