

Diversity ACT Community Services

1. Please provide the following information on your group/organisation including the full name of your key contact person:

Name: - Adrian Brown

Company: - Diversity ACT Community Services

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Email Address: - info@diversityact.org.au

Phone Number: -

2. Has your organisation/group developed a written analysis of the ACT Budget that it would like to submit to the Committee?

No

3. Please list, in order of priority, your three main areas of concern regarding the ACT Budget 2013-2014: (there is space available in the next question to expand on this list)

a. - Amount of allocated funds within ACT Budget for Diversity ACT

4. What are your views on the Budget in relation to your priority areas? (provide details on those items you listed above)

For Diversity ACT, which is a newly established community organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) Canberrans, we were disappointed both in the level of funding allocated for the ongoing funding of Diversity ACT's support services, as well as the indexation of that amount over the next 3-4 years. While we acutely recognise the difficult position the ACT Government and Treasury is in in terms of managing a pathway back to surplus, our position as a community-initiated and rapidly developing organisation is that we cannot manage existing demands for our services with the level of funds provided, and that the capping of funds provides real risks of us having to stymie or turn away demand for our services at present and into the future - including through the halting of any targeted support programs due to the lack of funds to pay for additional social workers as previously envisaged. This would be highly disappointing for us and a significant missed opportunity for the government, as it would mean that while Diversity ACT could provide a facility and basic support staff, we couldn't provide the level of deeper services (such as trained counsellors, targeted support groups, and education programs) to meet and respond to

issues of mental health and social inclusion within the LGBTIQ community. Providing this by Diversity ACT is a cost-effective and efficient way to improve wellbeing among at-risk members of this group, and reduces the rotation of vulnerable persons through multiple support agencies who cannot (or have little experience in) responding to LGBTIQ-specific issues. Although we recognise that the funds provided is low given budgetary constraints and our lack of existing service provision profile, Diversity ACT's phenomenal growth in the last 12-18 months is testament for the level of demand and support within the wider community for the targeted support services that we aim to provide. The Budget's provision of \$120,000 however falls under our minimal budgeted costs (of \$168,000) to both pay for support staff and meet our ongoing running costs, constraining our ability to expand our programs and to meet the existing demand for services by clients already coming to us for LGBTIQ-specific needs and support.

5. Are there any other particular issues with the ACT Budget that you would like to bring to the Committee's attention?

Yes

An additional minor point we were interested in raising was the listing of Diversity ACT's funding under the Youth Engagement and Family support for Youth initiative. While this may just be an arbitrary categorisation decision by the Directorate, we are concerned that defining us under this line item may confuse some community providers to think we provide services to LGBTIQ youth only, and not to our other spectrum of LGBTIQ services. Diversity ACT would like it made known that while we do provide youth services that provide specifically-targeted services to LGBTIQ youth (including coming out support, a youth support group, and education and outreach in partnership with ACT schools), most of our other programs are targeted at a full spectrum of age groups ranging from young people to seniors, and we have never envisaged ourselves a just a support service for LGBTIQ youth.

6. Did you provide a budget submission to the ACT Government?

Yes (go to question 7)

7. Do you think that the Budget has addressed the issues raised in your submission?

No

See response to Questions 4 and 5.

8. Does your organisation/group wish to give its views in a Committee public hearing on Friday 14 June 2013, at the Legislative Assembly, London Circuit, Canberra.

Yes