



# ACOSS Annual Report

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2018 - 2019



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# Like our work? Support ACOSS Today.

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ACOSS and our community of supporters share a vision for a fair, just, diverse and sustainable Australia. Your support is critical to ACOSS continuing to be a strong and influential advocate for change.

## **Support us today in one of the following ways:**

**Join the ACOSS Membership Network** - Organisations can become a member and join our network of community sector organisations advocating for a fairer Australia. Members play a vital role in shaping ACOSS policy and advocacy and amplifying the voice of community in public debate. Members also receive a suite of membership services including sector-specific media and policy updates, access to advocacy, training, networking opportunities and more. Find out more on our website at [www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au).

**Make a donation or become a regular giver** - Support the work of ACOSS by making a one off donation or becoming a regular giver. All donations to ACOSS directly support our policy and advocacy work. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Make a donation via our website at [www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

**Share our work** - Share our work with your colleagues, friends, family and networks. We know that strength lies in numbers. The more people who understand poverty and disadvantage in Australia, and what can be done to reduce both, the better. Share this publication with your network and help drive the conversation about how we tackle poverty and inequality in Australia.

**Sign up as an Individual Supporter** - Be part of the change. Add your voice to our cause as an Individual Supporter of ACOSS and we will keep you in the loop with regular policy and community sector updates and opportunities to take action. Become a supporter today - it's free - sign up on our website at [www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au).

**Follow us online** - Follow ACOSS on Twitter and Facebook and tell us your story.

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With thanks to our Partners:



## President's Message

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During a period of focus on a Federal election, ACOSS's resources have been carefully managed by a dedicated Board and staff team. After two years of investment in building our resource base, we worked to a balanced budget for this financial year, recording a modest surplus. We also broadened our sponsor and partnership arrangements, thereby expanding our capacity to work on key projects.

However, our Council of Social Service and National Organisation members remain at the heart of our work. They provide connection to the community sector, a conduit to the voices of Australians directly affected, and feedback and evidence that are crucial to development of our policy agenda. The broader ACOSS membership also contributed to a revised strategic plan, which will see the organisation working to a refreshed and relevant set of goals.

From a governance perspective, we settled into changes following a reduction in the size of our Board, while strengthening relationships and communication. We also conducted a review of the ACOSS Rules to correct minor anomalies and provide clarity regarding election procedures for the ACOSS Board. It was a privilege to lead the ACOSS Board for another year, and I record my appreciation for my Board colleagues. The work of Peter McNamara as Treasurer and Hang Vo



as Deputy President warrants special mention.

The ACOSS staff put in another year of strategic work in pursuit of national social policy improvements. Dr Cassandra Goldie leads the team with enormous talent, experience and humanity. Cassandra's articulate, informed and influential presentation as our principal advocate is central to ACOSS's credibility and national profile. The ACOSS Board records its deep gratitude for the efforts of Cassandra and the whole staff.

In closing, I also thank ACOSS's members, project partners, sponsors and friends for their continued support of ACOSS's vital advocacy work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Reidy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Tony Reidy,**  
President

# CEO's Message

It was an eventful year for our sector, with April's Federal Budget doubling as the Coalition's launch campaign for the Federal Election, which followed in May. In the lead-up to both events, ACOSS advanced detailed arguments for a fairer distribution of income and wealth backed by robust evidence, strategic advocacy and sector coordination.

The policy outcomes have been mixed, but the power of people's voices to change community attitudes gives me optimism for the future. The post-election increase in support for ACOSS's campaign to 'Raise the Rate' of Newstart and related Allowances by a minimum of \$75 per week is evidence of this.

Publication in 2018 of the Poverty in Australia and Inequality in Australia reports, in partnership with the University of NSW, marked another milestone. The eminent Professor Peter Saunders led the partnership from UNSW until his recent retirement. We have benefited enormously from his incomparable expertise, and I thank him for his enormous contribution to social policy in Australia.

As of next year, ACOSS will report against its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, developed in consultation with ACOSS members and other stakeholders.

In keeping with this plan, ACOSS will, more than ever, put people directly affected at the heart of our work, increase mobilisation of our members, develop the best thinking and ideas, and strengthen the evidence base to deliver better living standards for those being left behind.

Finally, my thanks for the support of the ACOSS staff, whose dedication makes our work possible. In particular, I would like to thank Michael Raper for striving for a fairer, more inclusive Australia over the course of his highly impactful career. Michael retired from paid work in August, but I know his legacy will continue to inspire those across the sector who have had the privilege of working with him.



**Cassandra Goldie,**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



# The Year at a Glance

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## Total Website Users



**85.3%**  
New Users

**14.7%**  
Returning Visitors

## Total Page Views

2017-2018 **329 781**

2018-2019 **343 384**

## Traffic

**68.3%**  
Organic

**23.5%**  
Directed

**6.6%**  
Social

**4.4%**  
Referral

## Members

National Organisation Members

**84**

**↑ 17%**  
INCREASE

Associate Members

**64**

**↑ 1.5%**  
INCREASE

Individual Supporters

**1640**

**↑ 26%**  
INCREASE

## Social Media



2017-2018

**5052** likes  
**5130** followers

2018-2019

**7783** likes  
**7962** followers



2018

**22 782** followers

2019

**24 500** followers

**↑ 26 100**  
**♥ 35 500**

## Media Mentions

2018

**3700**

2019

**4500**

**↑ 22%**  
INCREASE

## Publications and Submissions



**27** submissions (2018-2019 financial year)



**24** publications (position statements, briefings, papers and publications)

*We recognise the right of  
all people in Australia to  
opportunity, justice and  
equality.*

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# Strategic Plan

## 2014 – 2018

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### OUR VALUES:

We recognise the right of all people in Australia to opportunity, justice and equality.

We believe in supporting people in Australia affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality to achieve an adequate standard of living and the right to make the key decisions affecting their lives.

We recognise the heritage, history and continuing cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and the need for action to advance the rights and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We value national policy solutions that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

We respect the human rights and the civil, social, economic and cultural contributions of all individuals and communities.

### OUR VISION:

A fair, inclusive and sustainable Australia where all individuals and communities have the opportunities and resources they need to participate in and benefit from social and economic life.

### OUR GOALS (2014-2018)

GOAL 1: Increase our impact on key policy decisions and actions.

GOAL 2: Development of evidence and experience based solutions.

GOAL 3: Support and grow the effectiveness of community service organisations.

GOAL 4: Build our organisation to be dynamic and sustainable.

# Highlights of 2018 – 2019

1. **Raise the Rate:** Launched this year to lift the unemployment payment, or Newstart allowance, the Raise the Rate campaign attracted broad support from politicians, influencers, media and the community and developed a momentum of its own.
2. **ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership:** We launched two important national reports this year through the **ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership**: [Inequality in Australia 2018](#) and [Poverty in Australia 2018](#), influencing public debate.
3. **Employment services reform:** ACOSS played an active role as a member of an independent **Employment Services Review Expert Advisory Panel** reviewing the current Jobactive system and outlining directions for reform. In that role, ACOSS ensured that the Government engaged directly and meaningfully with people who are unemployed to ensure their experience was at the centre of the review.
4. **ACOSS Member Strategy Forum:** In the wake of unexpected Election outcome, ACOSS convened a national member meeting to take stock, recalibrate, think critically and develop a strategy for coordinated advocacy and impact under the returned Morrison Government. Members zeroed in on the need for our sector to work differently in the way we approach locational diversity (to bridge the urban and regional divide); to enable and amplify the voices of people directly affected by policy; how to influence political decision-making by leveraging the power of our network; and how to use language and framing which will cut through.
5. The development of [a new strategic plan for 2019-22](#): We invited members, partners, critical friends and people directly affected by policy to challenge us to refresh our strategy and make some transformational changes to the way we work. Our new Strategic Plan reflects their feedback and will be a framework for effecting some major shifts in the way we work in the 3 years ahead. The first and highest priority in the plan is to develop a new approach to enabling and amplifying the voices of people directly affected by policy. We are some way down the road on this journey but still have a long way to go until we can truly say that people

directly affected are at the centre of our policy and advocacy work, let alone at the centre of government policy making, our ultimate goal.

6. Energy and climate: We built powerful coalitions and led impactful advocacy to improve energy efficiency in new and existing homes and strengthen emissions reduction targets. With the Brotherhood of St Laurence, we commissioned strategic research to address energy and climate policy evidence gaps, which we have leveraged to advocate for more equitable and sustainable policy approaches.

# Profile: ACOSS Raise the Rate Campaign

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The Raise the Rate campaign enjoyed phenomenal success in 2018/19, mobilising thousands of people across the country to campaign for an increase to Newstart and Youth Allowance, and securing the support of influential figures including economists, big and small business, unions and political leaders.

ACOSS received generous financial support from a range of philanthropists backing the Raise the Rate campaign, which has greatly increased the campaign's reach and effectiveness. ACOSS hired Pas Forgiione as the RTR Campaign Coordinator, and Pas has done excellent work mobilising people on Newstart and related payments to be involved in the campaign, as well as engage grassroots groups and local councils to advocate for an increase to Newstart.

The funding also allowed ACOSS to provide financial support to grassroots organisations that have been campaigning for an increase to Newstart and related payments. The work of grassroots organisations as well as people on payments speaking out has been instrumental in maintaining pressure on decision makers and keeping the issue at the fore of public debate.

The low rate of Newstart was a key issue in the coverage of the 2019 budget as well as the election. The campaign is so well known now that it regularly appears in the media unprompted, from being raised regularly on breakfast radio, through to appearing weekly on shows like Shaun Micallef's, *Mad as Hell*.

In 2018, ACOSS commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to model the economic benefit of increasing Newstart and related payments by \$75pw, which found that such an increase would deliver 12,000 new jobs and inject \$4 billion into the economy. This report has been widely used and greatly strengthened the economic case for lifting Newstart.

ACOSS spent time in regional communities holding forums with people on allowances, which enabled the development of relationships that would not have happened without the campaign. The strong focus on supporting people to do their own campaigning, whether that be through sharing their story publicly to meeting their MP, has been extremely effective, with hundreds of people signing up to meet their local politician and sharing their stories.

Support for the campaign grew strongly this year, with the Country Women's Association, Arthur Sinodinos, Matt Canavan, the IPA, Grattan Institute, Deloitte Access Economics, National Rural Health Alliance, and 32 local councils, including the City of Sydney all backing an increase to Newstart. RBA Governor Philip Lowe stated that increasing Newstart, stating it would be a good way to stimulate the economy. In addition, 18/19 saw the entire crossbench in the House of Representatives, and almost all crossbench senators support increasing Newstart.

Public support for raising Newstart grew strongly thanks to the work of the campaign. Polling by Essential found that 72% of people in Australia support an increase (April 2019) up from 52% two years earlier (Per Capita, April 2017). This shows that we are changing the story about Newstart and unemployment, which is key to winning an increase.

**The campaign continues and will not stop until we win.**



# Profile: Poverty and Inequality Partnership

The ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership is a 5 year, \$2 million collaboration to translate academic research into policy impact. The partnership is funded by UNSW, key ACOSS member organisations and some generous philanthropists. In this its second year, the Partnership launched two major reports through high profile events which attracted extensive media coverage.

The [Inequality in Australia Report](#) was launched on 31 July 2018 by Professor Peter Saunders and Dr Cassandra Goldie, with a fabulous panel of speakers to dissect its implications (including Professor Peter Whiteford and Dr Emma Dawson from Per Capita). The

key findings - that highlighted growing wealth inequality and an increasing divide between younger and older people - received extensive coverage in all major papers, TV and radio.

[The Poverty in Australia Report](#) was launched by Dr Cassandra Goldie at the National Press Club on 16 October, attended by member organisations, media and people directly affected by poverty.

As well as launching these two reports, our work in 2018-19 laid the foundations for a tranche of new projects to fulfil the key objectives. These include the development of a major new online poverty and inequality data hub a spatial poverty analysis of local area poverty levels done in partnership





between ACOSS, the Social Policy Research Centre and City Futures at UNSW and an analysis of research on the relationship between income and health outcomes in Australia.

**A new national online poverty and inequality data hub:** This website will provide a vital interface between the research work of the Partnership and communities of interest. It will hold the latest data on poverty and inequality, and will provide a key resource in Australia for policymakers, advocates, teachers and students, researchers and the general public.

**Local area poverty analysis:** This dynamic new project aims to deepen our understanding of poverty through the development of a micro-simulation model that will show the extent of after-housing poverty at the local level in Australia. The end result will be an online infographic-style report including interactive maps that will be available on the Poverty and Inequality website.

Along with this a downloadable report and infographic presentation will be available.

**New health equity metrics:** Planning is underway for the development of a stable of health equity metrics to assess the relationship between income and health in Australia.





# Profile: Employment Services Reform

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ACOSS played a key role in the work of the government's Employment Services Expert Panel, which recommended sweeping reform of employment services. The Panel proposed a new employment services system based on personal agency rather than compliance with rigid activity requirements, increased investment in support for people unemployed long-term, and a funding model that makes room for local partnerships among employment service providers, employers, and community services. The broad direction of the proposed reforms is in keeping with long-standing ACOSS policies. A new employment services model is being trialled in two regions from July 2019.

As part of our advocacy of reform of employment services, we organised roundtables of members to identify the key problems and solutions, argued for the Panel and the Government to hear the views of people directly affected, and organised our first online survey of user experience of jobactive. Both the survey and our discussions with members revealed the harsh impact of a dysfunctional, compliance-based system on the health and well-being of people who have the misfortune to become unemployed. The most serious problems

remain - including the automated suspension of over 2 million income support payments throughout the year under the 'Targeted Compliance Framework'. Nevertheless, as a result of our work in this area this year, ACOSS and members are in a stronger position to change things for the better.

In partnership with Jobs Australia, we published the first of what we hope will be a regular briefing on the profile of people on unemployment payments and their challenges in obtaining paid work: [Faces of Unemployment](#). This included the first public release of a profile of people receiving Newstart and Youth Allowances for more than a year. Highlights included the following facts: two-thirds of people on these payments had to rely on them for over a year, over 40% were over 45 years old, and over one-quarter have a disability. There were eight people either unemployed or under-employed for every job vacancy. This is vital information for our efforts to end the vilification and stereotyping of people on unemployment payments, and our advocacy to Raise the Rate.

# Profile: Climate and Energy Work

This year, ACOSS was integral to creating the [Healthy and Affordable Homes Coalition](#), bringing together a powerful alliance of 60 organisations across a number of sectors to secure improvements to the energy efficiency of existing homes, prioritising low-income households. Our advocacy has had a powerful impact, with the COAG Energy Council supporting new energy efficiency targets for new homes and conducting a review to improve energy efficiency measures for existing homes.

In recognition that climate change is a social justice and intergenerational equity issue, ACOSS has been working with member organisations to [develop joint positions and policies for a fair and just transition](#). In May 2019, ACOSS along with 39 of our members released a climate change statement calling for urgent action to tackle the climate crisis and build greater resilience to the climate change already locked in. The work has led to greater engagement within the social sector on the climate crisis and a greater understanding among decision makers and the public that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a people issue.

With the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), we have commissioned

strategic research to fill evidence gaps and strengthen our advocacy. We commissioned Frontier Economics to examine the impact that proposed energy transition policies and various emissions reductions levels would have on cost of electricity of low-income households - [Tackling climate change and energy affordability for low-income households](#). This has supported our advocacy for stronger emissions reductions targets in the energy sector.

With BSL, we also commissioned ANU to examine how much people on low - incomes spend on energy bills compared to other income groups and how this has changed over time. The report, [Energy Stressed in Australia](#), found that people on low-incomes are paying significantly and disproportionately more of their income on energy bills and this has increased in the last decade much more than for those on higher incomes. The research and report has built broad support for policy intervention to reduce energy stress for people on low incomes.

To build the evidence for equitable policy solutions, we jointly commissioned ANU to examine the effectiveness of select policy measures on reducing energy bills for low-income households to enable support for a more rapid transition to clean energy. We have leveraged the report [\*Affordable clean energy for people on low incomes\*](#), to build broad support for policies to improve energy efficiency of homes, introduce a default market offer, increase Newstart, and improve energy concessions.



# Profile: ACOSS Events

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ACOSS events provide a critical opportunity for community sector organisations and people directly affected to come together with government and business to analyse and debate the latest developments in policy and research. ACOSS events also facilitate networking within our member network.

## 2018 ACOSS National Conference: Rise to the challenge

The 2018 ACOSS National Conference was held at the SMC Centre in Sydney on the 28th and 29th of October 2018. The conference took a deep dive into the latest research and developments in social and economic policy with a focus on poverty and inequality in Australia. Sessions covered a number of topics including;

- Welfare conditionality
- Service codesign
- The role of advocacy in democracy
- Automated decision making in public administration

Keynote speakers included Professor Peter Dwyer (University of York), Virginia Eubanks (University of Albany), The Hon Paul Fletcher, Minister for Families and Community Services, The Hon. Linda Burney, Shadow Minister for Families and Community Services, and Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens.

The 2018 National Conference was supported by ACOSS Partners, Australia Post, HESTA, Infoxchange, the Group of Eight.



## The HESTA Community Sector Awards and ACOSS Conference Dinner

ACOSS was delighted to once again partner with HESTA for the HESTA Community Sector Awards. The HESTA Community Sector Awards acknowledge outstanding achievements in the community sector and were held in Sydney, in partnership with ACOSS, as part of the 2018 ACOSS National Conference. The HESTA Community Sector Awards was hosted by Sarah Ferguson, investigative reporter and presenter, ABC.



## The ACOSS Federal Budget and Election Breakfast

The ACOSS Federal Budget and Election breakfast was held on Monday 15 April in the weeks between the Federal Breakfast and Federal Election. The breakfast was hosted by Senior SMH Economics Reporter, Jessica Irvine and included keynote addressees and interactive Q&A Sessions with, The Hon Paul Fletcher, Minister for Families and Social Services and the The Hon Chris Bowen, Shadow Treasurer . Attendees also participated in a whole-of-room discussion led by panelists, Melinda Cilento, CEDA, Jo Schofield, Uniting Voice and Cassandra Goldie, ACOSS. This event was made possible with the support of the University of Technology Sydney and Community Sector Banking.



# Other Key Achievements

## 2018 – 2019

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### Federal Budget and Election

- We developed a suite of priorities to inform Election debate and ensured that our members were well briefed on election developments and policy priorities.
- We engaged in strategic media to ensure that an equity perspective was heard in election commentary.
- We succeeded in ensuring that the adequacy of the Newstart payment was a key Election issue, for the first time in a long time.
- We presented a set of robust and credible policy proposals to the Federal Budget process and coordinated the response of our sector to the Budget and the stark choice between tax cuts and services funding it presented.

### Community sector policy and advocacy

- In partnership with the Hands Off Our Charities Coalition, we successfully opposed laws that would have placed new regulations on charities and not-for-profits participating in the public debate.
- We forged a strong partnership of members, including the Councils of Social Service network, focused on ensuring that supplementary funding for the Equal Remuneration Order continues.
- We launched, in partnership with CHOICE, research that demonstrates that competitive models introduced into the vocational education and training and employment services sectors have largely failed to deliver better outcomes for consumers.
- We influenced the future shape of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, via advocacy to Treasury and parliamentarians on the future, remit, and functions of the Commission.



- We influenced the political agenda on fundraising reform, through coordinated advocacy, in partnership with the #fixfundraising coalition.
- We built the capacity of the sector to advocate on issues related to the Federal Budget via training and briefing materials.
- We influenced the future shape of the Australian Public Service by making submissions and facilitating, in partnership with the Australian Public Service Review, a roundtable for ACOSS members.
- We kept the authority to fund advocacy on the Department of Social Services' agenda.
- We planned the relaunch of the Australian Community Sector Survey in 2019.

## Social security policy and advocacy

- We teamed up with addiction and health experts, to successfully lobby the parliament to reject a bill to drug test people who are unemployed.
- We played a critical role in preventing the passage of social security cuts from going through parliament, including cuts to student payments and pensions.
- We worked to prevent the passage of the the automatic rent deduction bill, which would have reduced people's capacity to manage their own budgets.
- We successfully pursued administrative reforms so that single parents no longer have to complete a new form to access Newstart after their youngest child turns eight, reducing barriers to accessing income support.

## Other Key Achievements 2018 – 2019

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### Tax policy and advocacy

- In our lobbying of the parties, officials, and the media, we continued to advocate for the closure of tax shelters such as the capital gains tax discount, negative gearing, inequitable and excessive tax breaks for superannuation, and tax avoidance opportunities via discretionary trusts; and for the savings to be redirected to essential services and social security payments. The Opposition adopted a number of these proposals as policy, raising the public profile of these issues to a level we have not seen in years. At the same time, debate was polarised with the Government opposing change.
- Following the release of the Government's proposals to cut income taxes by \$36 billion a year by 2024, we raised (both in public and in Parliamentary lobbying) serious concerns about the impact on the capacity of future governments to fund essential services. While the tax cuts were passed by Parliament, the funding of essential services is an issue that will not go away. ACOSS played a key role in questioning the veracity of Budget estimates that project the slowest growth in public expenditure for 50 years.

### Health policy and advocacy

- We kept the sector informed about the rollout of the My Health Record by the Australian Government, and advocated to ensure that the architecture of the system protects the rights and interests of all patients with a My Health Record.
- We ensured the social determinants of health remained on the agenda in the Productivity Commission's inquiry into the social and economic benefits of improving mental health.

## **Housing and homelessness policy and advocacy**

- We worked with the national housing and homelessness peak bodies and the Everybody's Home campaign to ensure that housing was an issue in the Federal Election.
- We undertook coordinated advocacy with the COSSes to sustain pressure on the Government to restore funding to remote housing. We will continue these efforts.

## **Data, technology and digital inclusion policy and advocacy**

We continued our partnership with Infoxchange to build the knowledge of the sector on key issues affecting digital inclusion, data and technology.

We published a joint briefing note with them on the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, highlighting the research findings that there are too many people in Australia today who are digitally excluded, who face barriers to accessing digital technologies, and cannot participate fully in our online world.

We also published a briefing note to update our members about the Commonwealth's Data Sharing and Release reforms, highlighting the implications for people on low incomes. We flagged a number of specific risks, including the risks of including compliance and assurance in the remit of the data sharing framework, and the risks to privacy when data is shared.

## **Education policy and advocacy**

We raised the issue of student poverty on the political agenda via our coordinated advocacy to increase Youth Allowance in partnership with the Go8 Universities.

# Media Impact

With the federal election and the expansion of the Raise the Rate campaign, ACOSS has had a busy year in the media. The Raise the Rate campaign has generated myriad compelling media articles, focused on the first-hand experience of people struggling to get by on the low rate of Newstart. While many of these stories have been high-profile national stories, there has also been excellent local reporting of the issue, especially in regional areas. ACOSS has worked in partnership with people on Newstart to achieve this coverage, which has been instrumental in shifting the national debate to become more empathetic and supportive.



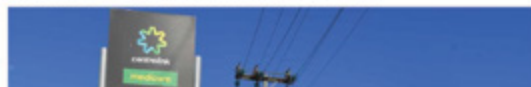
LEFT: ACOSS' submission to the Federal Budget called for funding for community services and attracted national media attention. February 17, 2019, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

BELOW and across: ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie responds to the Federal Budget from Parliament House, April 2019.



## Newstart increase: big majority of voters across parties back rise, poll finds

Exclusive: ACOSS survey finds 72% of respondents back boost to dole, which hasn't grown in real terms for two decades



ABOVE: Coverage of ACOSS polling in the lead up to the Federal Election, April 21, 2019.

RIGHT: ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie appeared on ABC News Breakfast on the Sunday morning following the Federal Election to discuss priorities for the re-elected government. May 18, 2019, ABC News Breakfast.



The Raise the Rate campaign visited a number of regional communities, receiving positive local media coverage.

CWA Australia supports ACOSS Raise The Rate campaign to increase Newstart



ABOVE: ACOSS Senior Advisor Social Security Advisor Charmaine Crowe, with Raise the Rate supporter Emily Lightfoot and CWA national president Tanya Cameron, The Border Mail, Tuesday 7 May 2019



ABOVE: ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie is interviewed in Cairns by the local ABC.

BELOW: ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie and Everybody's Home campaign spokesperson Kate Colvin address the media from the ALP National Conference in December.



BELOW: In March, ACOSS worked with the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children and researcher Juanita McLaren in exposing the Federal Government's treatment of single mothers at the UN.



BELOW: ACOSS partnered with Brotherhood of St Laurence to release a series of reports about reducing energy costs for people on low incomes, including through energy efficiency. Herald Sun, October 11, 2018.



# ACOSS Operations

In 2018-19 we continued our goal to build our organisation to be dynamic and sustainable.



We strengthened our existing partnerships and developed new ones, paving the way for a 54% increase in partnership income in 19/20.



We created, two new key positions - the **Director of Media and Communications** and **Raise the Rate Campaign Coordinator** strengthening our media, advocacy, campaigns and communications capacity.



We completed a revision of membership administrative procedures resulting in a **more efficient and streamlined member journey**.



We grew our **National Membership** by 17% in 12 months.



We secured continued funding of the **Poverty and Inequality Project**, **The Climate and Energy Project** and **Phases 1-3 of the Raise the Rate Campaign**.



We continued to **strengthen our financial and risk management procedures.**



We made changes to our internal meeting and planning processes, maximising the **effectiveness of the time we spend together.**



We were governed by a dynamic and skilled Board and Risk and Audit Committee.



We continued to develop our Contact Relationship Management system to better support our stakeholder engagement and advocacy work.



We developed a **[new strategic plan](#)** that included a number of 'enablers' that will drive our operational planning to 2022.

# Who We Are

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## STAFF

Cassandra Goldie - Chief Executive Officer

Kellie Caught - Senior Advisor (Climate and Energy)

Charmaine Crowe - Senior Advisor (Social Security)

Peter Davidson - Principal Advisor

Fernando De Freitas (*till October 2018*) - Media Advisor

Penelope Dorsch - Communications and Information

Kate Finlayson (*till September 2018*) - Media Advisor

Pasquale Forgione (*from February 2019*) - Campaign Coordinator (Raise the Rate)

Renata Franz - Operations Manager

Edwina MacDonald (*till January 2019*) - Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy

William Martin (*from June 2019*) - Marketing, Communications and Events Coordinator

John Mikelsons - Senior Advisor (Community Services and Health)

Chryl Perry (*from October 2018*) - Executive Assistant to the CEO

Jacqueline Phillips - Director of Policy and Advocacy

Daniella Previterra (*from March 2019*) - Administrative Assistant

Michael Raper - Senior Advisor (Business Development)

Amy Simmons - Director of Operations and Stakeholder Engagement (*from February 2019*)

Erin Snelgrove (*till September 2018*) - Executive Assistant to the CEO

Kylie Smith (*till May 2019*) - Events Officer

Nicole Stanmore (*till January 2019*) - Director of Business Development, Stakeholder Engagement and Operations

Monique Vandeleur (*from October 2018*) - Director of Media and Communications

Brendan Wylie - Membership Coordinator and Policy Support Officer





## BOARD

Mr Tony Reidy  
President

Ms Hang Vo  
Deputy President

Mr Jeremy Halcrow  
Treasurer *(till October 2018)*

Mr Peter McNamara  
Treasurer

Ms Amanda Bresnan  
Board Member

Ms Vanessa  
Fanning  
Board Member

Mr Matt Gardiner  
Board Member  
*(from October 2018)*

Mr David Panter  
Board Member

Ms Petra Hilton  
Board Member

Ms Connie Digolis  
Board Member

## EIGHT COUNCILS OF SOCIAL SERVICE

ACT Council of Social Service

NSW Council of Social Service

NT Council of Social Service

Queensland Council of Social Service

South Australian Council of Social Service

Tasmanian Council of Social Service

Victorian Council of Social Service

Western Australian Council of Social Service

# Who We Are

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## EIGHTY NATIONAL ORGANISATION MEMBERS

- Adult Learning Australia
- AIDS Trust of Australia
- Anglicare Australia
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Australian Association of Social Workers
- Australian Baha'i Community
- Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
- Australian Council of State School Organisations
- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Australian Insulation Foundation
- Australian Men's Health Forum
- Australian Neighbourhood Houses & Centres Association
- Australian Pensioners & Superannuants Federation
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Unemployed Workers' Union
- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
- Baptist Care Australia
- Better Renting
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Carers Australia
- Catholic Social Services Australia
- Centre for Social Impact
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia
- CHOICE
- Community Colleges Australia
- Community Housing Industry Association
- Community Mental Health Australia
- Community Transport Organisation
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- COTA Australia
- DCSS Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Disability Employment Australia
- Down Syndrome Australia
- Family and Relationship Services Australia
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Financial Counselling Australia
- Foodbank Australia
- Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- Good Shepherd Microfinance
- Goodstart Early Learning
- Homelessness Australia
- Homes for Homes
- HOST International
- Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis & Support Agency
- Infoxchange
- Jobs Australia
- Justice Connect
- Life Without Barriers

MacKillop Family Services  
Mind Australia  
Mission Australia  
Multiple Sclerosis Australia  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Legal Service  
National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation  
National Association of Community Legal  
Centres  
National Association of People With HIV  
Australia  
National Association of Tenant  
Organisations  
National Ethnic Disability Alliance  
National Family Violence Prevention  
Legal Services Forum  
National Rural Health Alliance  
National Shelter  
National Social Security Rights Network  
Playgroup Australia  
Public Health Association of Australia  
Reconciliation Australia  
Relationships Australia  
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and  
Islander Child Care  
Settlement Council of Australia  
Society of St Vincent de Paul National  
Council  
The Benevolent Society

The Salvation Army Australia  
The Smith Family  
Willing Older Workers  
UnitingCare Australia  
Volunteering Australia  
WESNET  
YMCA Australia  
YWCA Australia

## **NATIONAL ORGANISATION CONSTITUENCY MEMBERS**

Anti-Poverty Network SA  
National Council of Single Mothers and  
their Children  
People with Disability Australia  
Women With Disabilities Australia

# Who We Are

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## SIXTY THREE ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Accordwest
- ADRA Australia
- Anglicare (Sydney)
- Anglicare Victoria
- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies
- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- Australian Education Union
- Australian Services Union
- AWARE Community
- Berry Street
- BeyondHousing
- Canberra Community Law
- Catholic Social Services Victoria
- CentaCare New England North West
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Cereal for Coffee
- Churches Housing
- cohealth
- Community Industry Group
- Community Information and Support Victoria
- Community Resources
- Consumer Action Law Centre
- CORE Community Services
- Cowra Information & Neighbourhood Centre
- Early Childhood Australia
- Edmund Rice Centre
- Family Support Newcastle
- Financial Counsellors' Association of WA
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Homelessness NSW
- Illawarra Legal Centre
- Institute of Child Protection Studies
- Jannawi Family Centre
- Lutheran Community Care
- Melbourne's Leading Nanny Agency
- Mid Coast Communities
- Mountains Community Resource Network
- Nepean Community and Neighbourhood Services
- NSW Federation of Housing Associations
- PeakCare Queensland
- Penrith City Council
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- Rainbow Families
- Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia
- Samaritans Foundation
- Sector Connect
- Settlement Services International
- Social Futures
- South East Community Links
- South Port Community Housing Group
- Southern Youth and Family Services
- St John's Youth Services

Sydney Community Forum  
Tangentyere Council  
Tenants Queensland  
Think+DO Tank Foundation  
United Voice National Office  
Uniting Communities  
Uniting CountrySA  
Victorian Kids in Care Advocacy Service  
Welfare Rights Centre  
Westgate Community Initiatives Group  
WESTIR



# Who We Are

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## **POLICY ADVISORS**

### **Community Sector**

Natasha Cortis

Minh Nguyen

Health

Sharon Friel

Tadgh McMahon

Kees Van Gool

### **Housing and Homelessness**

Kath Hulse

Vivienne Milligan

Cameron Parsell

Judy Yates

### **Income Support and Employment**

Peter Whiteford

Roger Wilkins

### **Tax**

Nicholas Gruen

Helen Hodgson

Rick Krever

Julie Smith

Miranda Stewart

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS**

Australian Government Department of  
Social Services

Energy Consumers Australia

## **PARTNERS**

Australia Post

Community Sector Banking

HESTA

Infoxchange

Group of Eight

## **RAISE THE RATE SUPPORTERS**

The Broadly Trust

The Fay Fuller Foundation

The Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation

The Myer Foundation

The Maple Brown Family Foundation

The Reichstein Foundation

The Ross Trust

The Snow Foundation

The Wyatt Trust

The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

## **POVERTY AND INEQUALITY PROJECT PARTNERS**

University of NSW (UNSW)

Anglicare Australia

Australian Red Cross

BB and A Miller Foundation

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Cohealth

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

Hart Line & Raettvisa, sub-funds of

Australian Communities Fund

Mission Australia

Social Justice Fund

Society of St Vincent de Paul National  
Council

Salvation Army Australia

The Smith Family

## **PRO BONO SUPPORTERS**

Ashurst

NGO Recruitment

Mckinsey & CO

## **EVENT SPONSORS**

Australian Digital Health Agency

Financial Ombudsman Service Australia

Pro Bono Australia

University of Technology Sydney

Department of Families and Community  
Services

## **FACES OF UNEMPLOYMENT SPONSOR**

Jobs Australia

## **DONORS**

ACOSS would like to thank all who  
donated in the 2017-18 financial  
year, many of whom asked to remain  
anonymous. Particular thanks to.....

A/Prof Catherine Satzke and Dr Tim  
Peterson.

John C H Mitchell

Denis Klien

Gerard McMahon

Norelle Feehan

Oscar Roos

Grace Fitzgerald

Beth Slatyer

# ACOSS Publications

## FY 2018-2019

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### SUBMISSIONS

[Supplementary Submission to Australian Public Service Review](#)

May 2019

[Submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Social & Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health](#)

Apr 2019

[Submission to NEPP Energy Efficiency Existing Houses](#)

Mar 2019

[Minimum Wage Submission 2019](#)

Mar 2019

[Submission to 'Fair Dinkum' power inquiry](#)

Mar 2019

[Submission to the Social Security Commission Bill](#)

Mar 2019

[Submission on Australian Energy Regulator Hardship Guidelines](#)

Mar 2019

[Submission to Parents Next Inquiry](#)

Feb 2019

[Submission to the Expert Review of the Vocational Education and Training Sector](#)

Jan 2019

[Submission to the Sex Discrimination Amendment \(Removing Discrimination Against Students\) Bill 2018](#)

Jan 2019

[Submission on the implications of removing refundable franking credits](#)

Nov 2018

[Submission into Legislative exemptions that allow faith-based educational institutions to discriminate against students, teachers and staff](#)

Nov 2018

[Submission to the proposed amendments to the Electoral Legislation Amendment \(Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform\) Bill 2017](#)

Sep 2018

[ACOSS submission to the Inquiry on Intergenerational Welfare](#)

Sep 2018

[Submission into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive](#)

Sep 2018

[Supplementary evidence to jobactive inquiry](#)

Sep 2018



[Submission on the Terms of Reference to the Royal Commission on Aged Care Quality and Safety](#)

Sep 2018

[Submissions to My Health Records Amendment \(Strengthening Privacy\) Bill 2018](#)

Sep 2018

[Submission on Report for Achieving Low Energy Homes: Final draft](#)

Sep 2018

[Submission on Future Employment Services](#)

Aug 2018

[Submission into Charity Fundraising in the 21st Century](#)

Aug 2018

[Submission to National Energy Guarantee Draft Detailed Design for Commonwealth Elements](#)

Jul 2018

[Submission to Energy Security Board \(ESB\) National Energy Guarantee Draft Detailed Design Consultation Paper](#)

Jul 2018

[Submission into Cashless Debit Card Trial Expansion](#)

Jul 2018

[Submission on Constitutional Recognition](#)

Jul 2018

[Submission to Select Committee into the Obesity Epidemic in Australia](#)

Jul 2018

## **BRIEFING NOTES AND POSITION STATEMENTS**

[Briefing note: Social Housing Investment as Infrastructure](#)

Aug 2019

[Briefing note: Deeming rates explained](#)

Jul 2019

[Briefing note: The proposed Commonwealth Data Sharing Legislation and Consumer Data Right](#)

Jun 2019

[Briefing note: Energy prices hurt low-income families the most](#)

Jun 2019

[Briefing note on boosting growth: Tax cuts on payments and services?](#)

Jun 2019

[Briefing note on tax cuts: Who gains and what do they cost?](#)

Jun 2019

## ACOSS Publications FY 2018-19

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[Briefing note: The uncertain future of essential services and trends in Commonwealth spending](#)

Jun 2019

[Briefing note: Franking credits](#)

May 2019

[Briefing note: Future cuts to ERO supplementation](#)

Apr 2019

[Briefing note: Advocacy and the Federal Election](#)

Feb 2019

[Letter to Leader of the Opposition re Cashless Debit Card & Income Management](#)

Feb 2019

[Budget Priorities Statement 2019-20](#)

Feb 2019

[Briefing note: Electoral Act changes](#)

Nov 2018

[Letter to Prime Minister regarding anti-discrimination exemptions and other issues](#)

Nov 2018

[Joint briefing note: Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#)

Oct 2018

[Briefing note: Commissioning and getting better outcomes: Principles and practice](#)

Oct 2018

[History repeats on tax cuts and the Budget](#)

Jun 2018

## KEY REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

[Joint COSS letter to AEMC on wholesale demand response mechanism draft determination](#)

Aug 2019

[Response to Strategic Energy Plan draft metrics](#)

Mar 2019

[Affordable clean energy for people on low incomes](#)

Jan 2019

[Letter to Leader of the Opposition re Cashless Debit Card & Income Management](#)

Feb 2019

[Annual Report 2017-18](#)

Oct 2018

[Poverty in Australia 2018](#)

Oct 2018

[Energy stressed in Australia: a joint report with Brotherhood of St Laurence](#)

Oct 2018

[Voices of Unemployment](#)

Oct 2018

[Joint report: Tackling climate change and energy affordability for low-income households](#)

Sep 2018

[Analysis of the impact of raising benefit rates](#)

Sep 2018

[Faces of unemployment](#)

Sep 2018

[Competition Policy and Human Services:  
Where Theory Meets Practice](#)

Sep 2018

[Competition Policy and Human Services:  
Where Theory Meets Practice -  
Introductory summary](#)

Sep 2018

[Inequality in Australia 2018 Factsheet](#)

Aug 2018

[Inequality in Australia 2018: The causes  
and profile of income inequality.  
Supplementary report](#)

Aug 2018

[Inequality in Australia 2018](#)

Aug 2018

# COSS Network Value Statement

The Councils of Social Service across Australia **have unity of purpose and a compelling case to end inequality and poverty.** That's what motivates us and where our power to influence is.

Our combined national network has almost 4000 organisations and thousands more individuals working with them: that's the foundation of who we are, that is our power to influence.

One purpose, one message, one goal, thousands of voices.

That's why our network is engaged with government in negotiating policies that will meet our goals - and theirs. Only by staying engaged can we achieve change.

That's why both community organisations and the business sector want to form alliances with us. Those alliances make our network even more formidable.

This time of crisis in politics is rich with possibility for the new way of working that the COSS network has embraced.

Australians are recognising that the COSS network can be a voice not just for people surviving on the lowest of incomes and experiencing inequality and disadvantage, but for everyone who has a stake in creating a more equal, prosperous and inclusive nation.

To achieve the goal of ending inequality and poverty, we - as well as our allies - build resilience within communities by enabling and amplifying their voices to challenge policies, systems, behaviours and attitudes.

We equip them, and our strategic partners, with the compelling evidence - the big picture on the social, economic and political need for change, and the dramatic, moving human experiences that are the motivator for what we do.

*This time of crisis in politics is rich with possibility for the new way of working that the COSS network has embraced.*

We listen to people in communities through consultation and grassroots engagement, we mobilise the skills and experience in communities so their voice grows in power, endurance and eloquence now and through the generations.

We speak not only of the challenges faced by communities and individuals but, most critically, the successes. They are an essential part of the evidence for change.

Yes, the number of organisations, alliances and individuals is one measure of the COSS network's influence.

But the supreme indicator of our powerful influence and success is in the number of lives we change and the number of communities we enrich through an end to poverty, inequality and disadvantage and the creation of a more equal and inclusive Australia.





**RAISE THE RATE** 

**NEWSTART ISN'T WORKING.**

THERE'S BEEN NO INCREASE IN REAL TERMS TO NEWSTART IN 20 YEARS, LEAVING PEOPLE TO STRUGGLE TO GET BY ON \$48 A DAY - THAT EQUIVES TO LESS THAN \$18,000 A YEAR.

It's time to Raise the Rate to give people the support they need to get through tough times and into sustainable work.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN AT [WWW.RAISETHERATE.ORG.AU](http://WWW.RAISETHERATE.ORG.AU)

**RAISE THE RATE**

[www.raisetherate.org.au](http://www.raisetherate.org.au) | #raisetherate

**RAISE THE RATE**

[www.raisetherate.org.au](http://www.raisetherate.org.au) | #raisetherate

# 2018 – 19 Financial Report: Treasurer's Message



In FY18/19, ACOSS achieved a small surplus. This follows three years of strategic investment to diversify income sources including the expansion of ACOSS' Strategic Partnership Program and memberships. This Board strategy has seen income grow approximately 20% year on year over the last two years.

The total income for the year was \$2,908 000. The key areas of income growth year on year were project funding predominantly the Raise the Rate Campaign and strategic partnerships.

Overall expenditure increased in line with the growth of the budget. The largest expense category is Salaries followed by Project Activity Costs. These cover community organisation grants, meetings and events, digital communications and costs associated with supporting people directly affected to participate in activities as representatives, advisors and event participants.

Equity reserves as 30th June 2019 (\$587,000) are within the benchmark

set by the Board, underpinning the organisations future financial sustainability.

The 2019 financial statements have been audited by Stuart Brown and an unqualified audit opinion statement was issued. Copies of our audited financial statements can be downloaded from the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Website

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and discipline of the Board especially Tony Reidy, Hang Vo and the Management team especially Cassandra Goldie, Amy Simmons and Michael Raper

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter', enclosed in a thin blue rectangular border.

**Peter McNamara**  
Treasurer, ACOSS

## 2018 – 19 Financial Report

Financial Performance	FY18/19	FY17/18
<b>Income</b>		
Australian Government Grant	\$919,691	\$911,568
Project Funding	\$842,951	\$319,390
Membership Fees	\$411,913	\$365,490
Sponsorship	\$435,300	\$485,500
Donations	\$34,444	\$19,516
Other	\$264,623	\$323,524
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,908,921</b>	<b>\$2,424,988</b>
<b>Expense</b>		
Salaries & On-costs	\$1,786,154	\$1,694,434
Activity Costs	\$628,730	\$318,463
Travel	\$109,757	\$145,045
Administration	\$239,669	\$181,413
Premises	\$142,309	\$142,397
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,906,619</b>	<b>\$2,481,752</b>
Surplus (Deficit)	2,302	(56,764)



<b>Financial Position</b>	<b>FY18/19</b>	<b>FY17/18</b>
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<b>Assets</b>		
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Cash & Equivalent	\$1,599,660	\$1,141,346
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Trade & Other Receivables	\$351,711	\$449,200
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Non-Current Assets	\$81,406	\$94,745
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,032,777</b>	<b>\$1,685,291</b>
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<b>Liabilities</b>		
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Trade & Other Payables	\$1,154,749	\$841,425
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<b>Employee Benefits</b>	<b>\$273,802</b>	<b>\$240,867</b>
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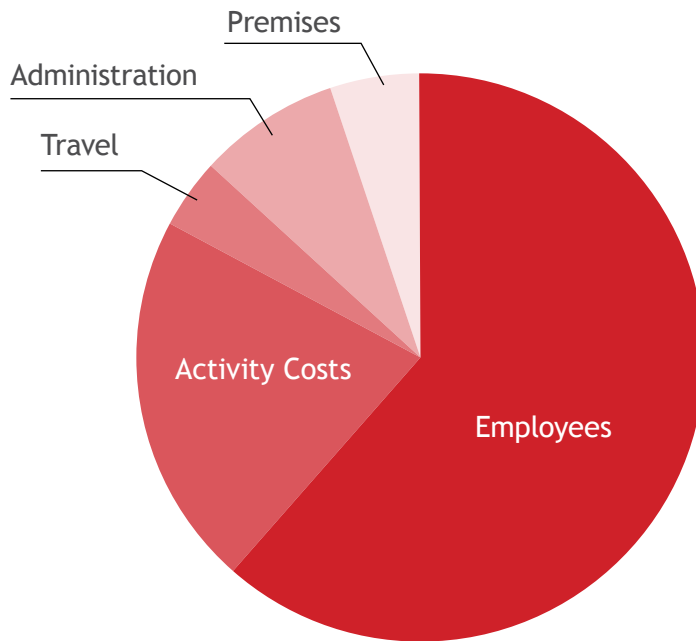
Non-Current Liabilities	\$16,402	\$17,477
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,444,953</b>	<b>\$1,099,769</b>
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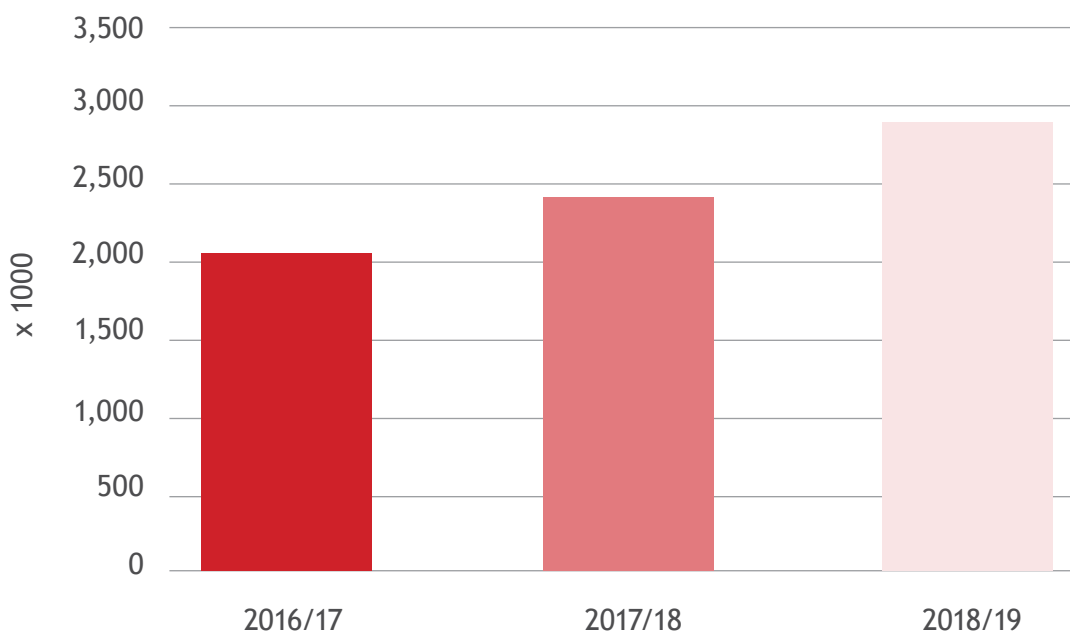
Equity	\$587,824	\$585,522
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# 2018 – 19 Financial Report

## Our Spending FY18/19



## Income







Australian Council of Social Service

[www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/AustralianCouncilofSocialService>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/ACOSS>