

# Australian Council of Social Service

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Strategic Plan  
2019 - 2022



# A Note From the CEO

An end to poverty, an inclusive community, a fair economy and a liveable climate: ACOSS shares a proud history of working towards this future with our members, partners and the community.



ACOSS wants everyone to have an adequate income, secure housing, decent paid work, affordable clean energy and access to the services they need, funded through a fair tax system. We will play our part in advocating for self-determination for Australia's First Peoples. We will bring people together, especially people on low incomes, our members, academia, philanthropists and partners, collaborating to achieve positive change. We will stand up for human rights.

Over the next three years, we will strengthen the way ACOSS works to increase our impact. Through our four Strategic Priorities, we will seek resourcing and work hard to ensure:

People who are directly affected are at the centre of our work.

The combined power of our member network is further mobilised to achieve transformative change. We are at the cutting edge of new ideas that will drive a better future.

The community knows the facts: the level, nature and drivers of poverty and inequality.

Of course, ensuring the wellbeing of our team is also key to enabling the change we are here to make, as are our success in securing sustainable resourcing, our embrace of technology, and our commitment to measuring the impact we make under this plan.

Join us as we drive the changes we need to make.

**Cassandra Goldie.**



## Our Vision

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An end to poverty in all its forms; economies that are fair, sustainable and resilient; and communities that are just, peaceful and inclusive.

## Who We Are

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We are a national advocate supporting people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality, and the peak council for community services nationally.

## How We Work

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We work at the national level, to influence changes to federal policies and laws.

We collaborate with our members including our National members and with the State and Territory Councils of Social Service.

We support the voices of people directly affected by policy.

We are dynamic, determined and strategic.

We are uncompromising in our commitment to human rights and equity and to calling out human rights breaches and inequities.

We partner with allies in diverse sectors around common goals to maximise our combined impact.

We work to find common ground across difference.



## Our Values

We believe that no one should have to live in poverty and that all people should be treated with dignity and respect.

We are committed to the full realisation of human rights.

We value diversity and work inclusively.

We support self-determination for Australia's First Peoples.

We want a sustainable future for all.

## The Change We are Here to Make

We are working to ensure that Australia achieves its **2030 targets** under the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on:

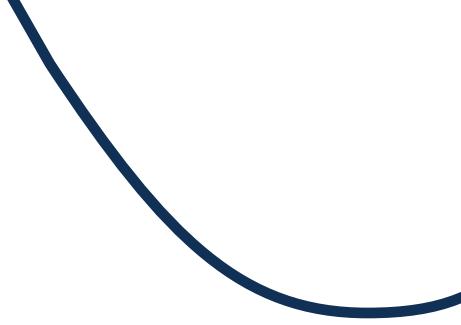
reducing at least by half the proportion of people living in poverty; and

progressively achieving and sustaining income growth of the 40 per cent of the population with the lowest incomes at a rate higher than the national average.

To achieve these targets, we **develop policy, advocate and conduct research** to effect the following policy **outcomes**:

A fair **social security system** that ensures we all have an adequate income to cover the cost of living and to live with dignity, free from poverty.

An equitable **tax system** that provides adequate revenue to fund services and supports today and in the future.



**Full employment** (employment opportunities with adequate paid working hours for those who seek them), including for people currently unemployed long term, with responsive, quality employment services for people disadvantaged in the labour market.

**Quality services** are funded fairly to meet diverse community needs, enable innovation and provide decent wages for workers, within a new funding framework that recognises the real costs of service delivery and fosters collaboration.

Safe, affordable, secure and sustainable **housing for everyone**.

Effective action to address **climate change** and improve **energy** affordability, through a rapid transition to a clean economy which is just, inclusive, equitable and affordable. People most vulnerable to climate impacts are supported to adapt and recover.

**Self-determination** for Australia's First Peoples.

We will also work to ensure that people are at the centre of policy design and debate, including by ensuring that:

**People** who access services are key **partners in service design**, along with governments, communities and providers.

The voices of **civil society** and **people experiencing poverty** and disadvantage are amplified in the public sphere.

People on low incomes or facing other barriers to access are supported through the **digital transformation** of our economy and service system.

# **3-year Strategic Priorities:**

## New Ways of Working to Accelerate Change

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# Priority 1: Enable and Amplify

**Outcome:** People who are directly affected are at the centre of policy debate and development.

**Strategy:** *We will listen deeply to those who are affected by poverty in developing policy, amplify these voices in public debate and enhance the capacity of people to self-advocate for change.*

## Actions:

We will provide practical, financial, media and policy support for people directly affected to influence policy and have their voices heard in public debate, including by strengthening and resourcing existing community networks.

We will enhance our campaigning capacity and capabilities by embedding strategies, processes and learnings gained from the Raise the Rate campaign.

We will develop mechanisms to hear and respond to the priorities of people directly affected by poverty in the development of our priorities, policy positions and strategies.

We will invest in direct research initiatives that highlight the experience and perspectives of people directly affected.

We will create a more diverse and inclusive organisation by actively engaging people from diverse backgrounds as staff, Board members and advisors including, in particular, people from diverse cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

## Priority 2: Engage and Collaborate

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**Outcome:** The power of the ACOSS member network is leveraged more strategically to achieve transformative policy change.

**Strategy:** We will drive collaboration with our member network to build policy consensus, coordinate advocacy and amplify member voices.

### Actions:

We will develop a new engagement strategy that more powerfully harnesses the collective strengths of our members, including the Councils of Social Service, and maximises our shared impact.

We will enhance the capacity of our members to advocate through the development and sharing of tools and resources and delivery of training and events.

We will advocate for reform to create a policy and regulatory environment that supports the advocacy of the sector as part of a diverse civil society.

We will champion First Nations' calls for self-determination.



# Priority 3: Ideas and Influence

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**Outcome:** Decision makers are influenced to pursue systemic change that increases incomes, wellbeing, equity and inclusion.

**Strategy:** *Review and refresh our national policy agenda to ensure it responds to contemporary challenges and opportunities in pursuing systemic change.*

**Actions:**

We will pursue systems change, including by mapping pathways to change, building on our deep policy knowledge, the best available evidence and advocacy experience.

We will review comparative international approaches, elicit the experience of people directly affected and seek input from a diversity of experts to review and refresh our policy agenda.

We will secure resources for strategic research projects to address policy evidence gaps.

We will develop and strengthen communities of policy and research to test and enrich our ideas and extend our influence, including with academics, officials and policy advisors.

We will strengthen key relationships with members, decision-makers, opinion leaders, and alliances with other sectors to build support for reforms.

## Priority 4: Inquire and Illuminate

**Outcome:** The level, nature and drivers of poverty and inequality are well understood by policy makers and the community.

**Strategy:** *In partnership with UNSW, ACOSS will monitor the nature and extent of poverty and inequality in Australia and disseminate key findings effectively to inform public debate and public policy.*

**Actions:**

Produce timely, independent analysis of national rates of poverty and inequality, disseminated through publications, infographics, presentations, events, video and other social media content.

Broaden our analysis to explore the intersection between income poverty, health, justice and housing outcomes to  
a) strengthen the imperative to reduce income poverty and b) support broader advocacy for reform to health, legal and housing systems to improve equity.

Create an interactive online portal for access to current poverty and inequality data and trends over time.

# Enablers

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To achieve our Strategic Priorities we must ensure the following enablers are in place:

## **1. Sustainable resources**

Secure necessary resources and funding, including by exploring new, untapped funding opportunities that align with our priorities. Collaborate with our members to leverage and share resources more effectively.

## **2. A thriving team**

Support the wellbeing of our staff by ensuring a supportive and sustainable work environment; Recognise and celebrate team successes and learn from our failures together.

## **3. Effective operating systems and technology**

Improve operational systems and processes, including to ensure that our technological systems support more effective external engagement and operations.

## **4. Adaptive planning and impact measurement**

Develop new planning and impact measurement tools that support strategic focus while allowing responsiveness to the dynamic policy environment.



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