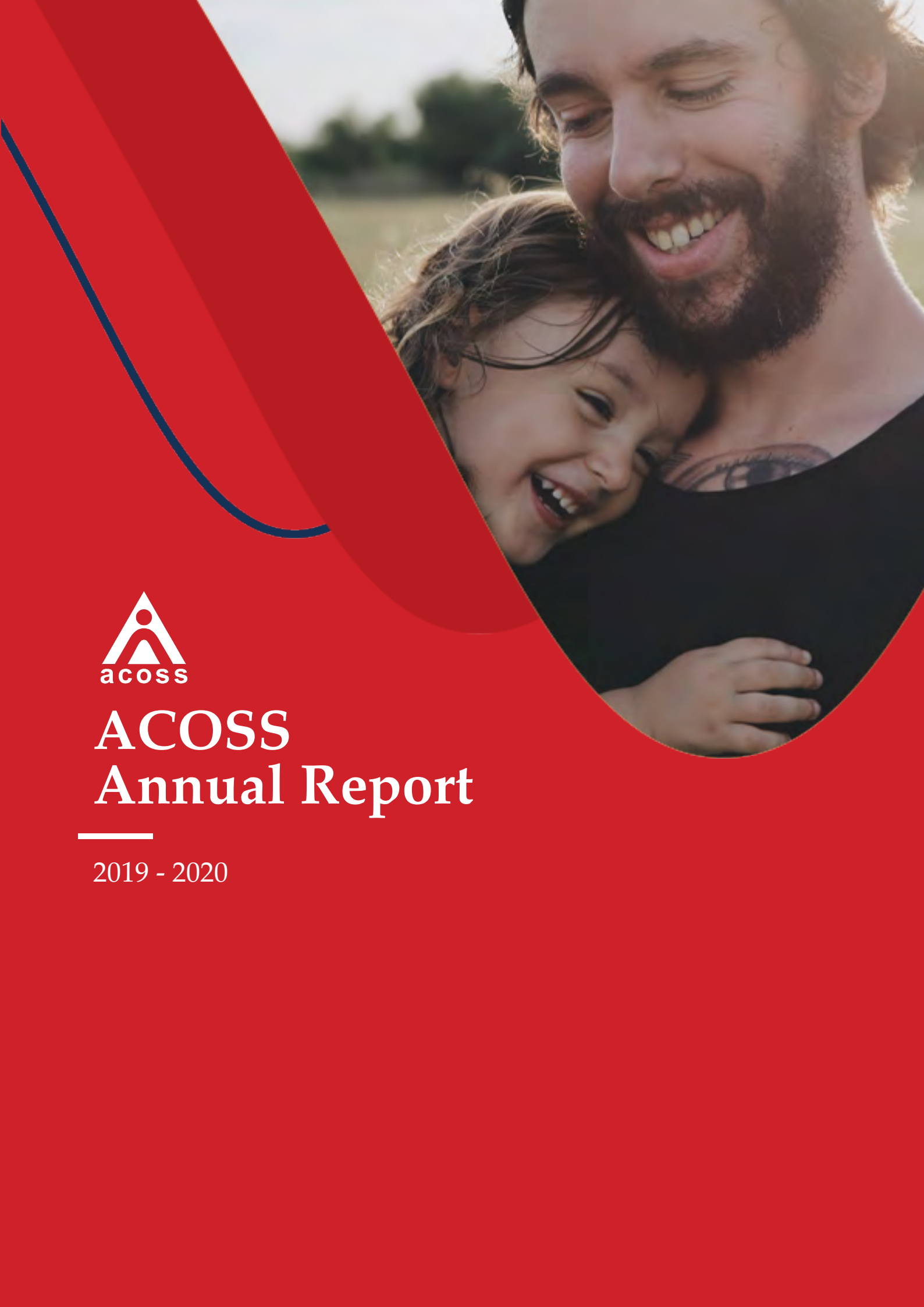




ACOSS Annual Report

2019 - 2020





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The Annual Report 2019-2020 was published in 2020
by the Australian Council of Social Service
Locked Bag 4777, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012 AUSTRALIA
Email: info@acoss.org.au | Website: www.acoss.org.au
ISSN: 1326 7124 ISBN: 0-85871-018-8
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Copies are available from the address above

With thanks to our Partners

ACOSS would also like to thank and acknowledge our primary funder, the Australian Government, Department of Social Services

About Us

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

Our Vision

An Australia that is free of poverty in all its forms; economies that are fair, sustainable and resilient; and communities that are just, peaceful and inclusive.

How We Work

We work at the national level, to influence changes to federal policies and laws.
We collaborate 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 are non-partisan.

How We Work

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.

President's Message

The brunt of the unprecedented dual COVID-19 and Bushfire crises this year has hit our most vulnerable the hardest. We have seen record numbers of Australians at risk of entrenched poverty and disadvantage, as well as increased uncertainty in the community sector due to the rising demand for services and resourcing gaps. We have never needed our valiant community services sector more and we have shown the power of our advocacy for those we represent like never before. Through this challenging time, I am pleased to report that the strategic discipline and governance controls adhered to by the Board and Management have ensured stability during this period.

Over the financial year the Board also endorsed the 2019 -2022 strategic plan, to foster new ways of working to accelerate change.

The plan embraces four themes:

- 1) 'Enable and Amplify'
- 2) 'Engaged and Collaborate'
- 3) 'Ideas and Influence'
- 4) 'Inquire and Illuminate'.

We look forward to reporting back on the progress of the strategic plan.

At the heart of ACOSS work are the people we serve and our partners from the National Membership, COSS network, Government, Corporate and Philanthropy sectors. We thank them for their commitment and focus as we strive together to make Australia more inclusive and equitable for all.

I especially want to acknowledge Tony Reidy, who stepped down after 5 years as President. Tony oversaw enormous changes at ACOSS including the governance reform, constitutional review, and strategic vision setting to ensure the sustainability of ACOSS for many years to come. We also welcomed onto the Board Violet Roumeliotis and Hayden Patterson.

The ACOSS Board is grateful for the dedication, intellect and energy of CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie and ACOSS staff during an enormously busy and challenging period.

Finally, I thank the Directors of the Board for their time, strategic discipline and stewardship. All offered generously and constructively.



Peter McNamara
President of ACOSS





CEO's Message

This year has been uniquely challenging for the community sector and people experiencing disadvantage. The Bushfires and the COVID-19 crises tested the nation. We have seen extraordinary acts of human endurance, compassion and care and we have faced terrible days- losing lives, jobs, homes and sometimes, hopes. We have been tested in ways many of us have never been before, as individuals, communities and as a nation.

Throughout this period, ACOSS played a key national coordination and advocacy role. We convened frequent National CEO Network meetings, hosted informational webinars to help ACOSS members access Federal Government support, and conducted and published findings from the 2019 Australian Community Sector Survey. We also produced numerous submissions (including on Robodebt, the Religious Freedoms Bill, the Bushfires and COVID-19) and detailed policy briefs (on income support, employment, housing, the community sector and the economy), which have formed the basis of engagement with the Federal Government.

In addition, our Poverty and Inequality partnership with UNSW Sydney launched key reports in February and May, and continues to monitor, explore the drivers of and develop solutions to poverty and inequality. We also partnered with Jobs Australia to produce the second Faces of Unemployment report, which looks behind the unemployment statistics to reveal who is affected, why it is so difficult for many unemployed people to find work, and the disturbing growth in long-term unemployment.

In collaboration with members and other stakeholders, we have seen major positive policy impacts as a result of this advocacy, including the temporary doubling of the JobSeeker and Youth Allowance payments, with movement towards a permanent increase for the first time in 26 years; abolition of the Robodebt scheme and repayments of illegal debts; and the extension of JobKeeper to charities with revenue loss of 15%, with government funding excluded from assessments.

We have worked to support and ensure that people

directly affected by poverty and inequality have been at the forefront of advocacy and public debate, including through the national Raise the Rate campaign to secure a permanent adequate increase to JobSeeker.

I would like to express sincere thanks for the inspiration and support provided by Tony Reidy, who stepped down as ACOSS President in June; Peter McNamara, previously ACOSS Treasurer and now President; our Board of Directors; our extraordinary dedicated staff team; and our National Members, State and Territory COSS's and other stakeholders. Truly, we are stronger together.

Cassandra Goldie
ACOSS CEO

Strategic Plan

2019 - 2022

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

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

- A fair social security system that ensures we all have an adequate income to cover the cost of living and 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.

New ways of working 2019-2023

Strategic 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 build the capacity of people to self-advocate for change.

Strategic Priority 2 ENGAGE AND COLLABORATE



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.

Strategic Priority 3 IDEAS AND INFLUENCE



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.

Strategic 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.

A Year of Unprecedented Crises

Across the country we saw a bushfire catastrophe unfold, fueled by climate change, over Australia's Black Summer of 2019-2020. Almost 19 million hectares were burned, 5,900 buildings destroyed and 34 people killed. The destruction of lives, homes and country were devastating and have meant that there is a long recovery ahead for communities across the country. We acknowledge the courage and tireless effort of the firefighters and community sector volunteers and staff to this crisis.

During this crisis we coordinated weekly meetings of ACOSS members to inform our advocacy and share information during the critical period. We also developed an "**Action Plan**" to advise the Federal Government on steps to address the needs of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage and the community services sector, contributed to the National Bushfire Recovery Agency's Charities Bushfire Coordination Forum and made submissions to the Senate Inquiry and Royal Commission on lessons learnt from the massive bushfire season.

Just as the bushfire season wound down, by late January 2020, the first novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases hit Australia. Of course this pandemic was marked not only by the health impacts but also the social and economic. The number of people receiving unemployment payments doubled from 800,000 in October 2019 to 1.6 million by March 2020 and Australia plunged into its first recession in almost 30 years, and the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930's.

We advocated for a strong health response, supported by an economic response that focussed on the needs of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. We coordinated weekly, then fortnightly meetings of ACOSS members to inform our advocacy and share information during this critical period. We also worked with people and organisations across the sector to advocate for increases to the Jobseeker payment, to ensure that community organisations could access the government supports offered to businesses (including successfully advocating for substantial changes to the JobKeeper wage subsidy) and for a budget that put the needs of people experiencing poverty front and centre.

We recognised the need for communication coordination in the sector to keep organisations informed of the many changes and requirements, as well as collaboration on advocacy, so we received a grant from the Ramsay Foundation to establish the Coronavirus Community Hub - with a regular



Raise The Rate Campaign

This year saw much of the hard work of all behind the Raise the Rate campaign come into fruition, with the Federal Government doubling unemployment payments in response to the COVID-19 economic shutdown. While this doubling was temporary, it nonetheless demonstrated that the government accepts that Newstart, now known as JobSeeker Payment, was totally inadequate for anyone to cover the basics.

This historic increase lifted more than one million people out of poverty for five months. ACOSS heard countless stories of people's lives changing because they were no longer living on \$40 a day. People told us they could fill their fridge with food for the first time. They could enrol in a TAFE course to pursue a career they are passionate about. We heard from women who were able to escape domestic violence because they had enough money to get out.

The Coronavirus Supplement has been a lifeline for the 2.3 million people receiving it.

We are certain that without the efforts of thousands across the country as part of the Raise the Rate campaign, we would not have achieved such an outcome. We congratulate each and every campaign supporter who has contributed so much

to lifting people out of poverty. And while the campaign continues, this increase puts the campaign in a much stronger position to succeed.

ACOSS has pivoted the campaign's objective to secure a social security system that meets people's financial needs, whether they are renting privately, raising children or studying. As the government lifted JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payment by \$275pw, the campaign has an opportunity to achieve an income support system that reflects financial need and keeps people out of poverty. As such, ACOSS is now calling for an increase of between \$185-\$275pw (depending on people's circumstances), which would lift payments up to the same level as the pension. This would ensure that everyone can access a minimum level of income, regardless of their age or other arbitrary criteria.

The true champions of the Raise the Rate campaign are the scores of people who courageously stepped forward to tell their stories about the brutal reality of struggling to survive on \$40/day. ACOSS now has more than 70 people with lived experience of income support, with whom we work to provide media interviews, which has elevated the perspective of the people most affected by government policies.

Media Impact

The voices of people on JobSeeker were central to the campaign's media coverage, including through the release of a number of national surveys:

- We released a survey of 500 people on Newstart at the end of July, which showed the stark reality of how hard it is to survive on \$40/day and received wide-spread coverage across News Ltd titles, including The Daily Telegraph and The Australian, more than 50 regional newspapers, and on commercial radio.
- In May nearly 1000 people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance who received the Coronavirus Supplement filled in our survey on the impact this had in their lives. The survey ran across News Ltd national papers, including and . Each piece featured a local Raise the Rate campaign supporter on JobSeeker. It was also covered nationally by the ABC across TV, radio current affairs and online platforms.



Poverty and Inequality Partnership

This historic partnership between ACOSS and UNSW, and supported by leading community service & philanthropic organisations, has shown the true depth of growing poverty and inequality in Australia.

In this third year of the five-year partnership, the project has grown from strength to strength, producing high quality detailed research reports, launching a website and generating significant media traction on issues affecting people experiencing poverty

Poverty and Inequality Website

The Poverty and Inequality Website was launched in December 2019 and had 68,486 users to end of June 2020. The website provides a repository for interactive poverty and inequality data, poverty and inequality reports and presentations.

Key Research Reports

We published two major reports on Poverty in Australia, a short infographic called "Poverty and Inequality Make Us Sick". In addition work continued on research on Inequality in Australia, as well as spatial poverty analysis in partnership between ACOSS, the Social

Policy Research Centre and City Futures at UNSW; and on health equity in partnership between CHETRE, ACOSS, and the Social Policy Research Centre.

Information dissemination

The partnership project is underpinned by a strategic communications and information dissemination strategy.

- Webinars were held prior to the launch of the report as part of the Australia at Home webinar series - Poverty in Australia: pre-Covid realities and post-Covid choices.
- The partnership hosted plenary sessions at the Australian Social Policy Conference, Perspectives on Poverty and Inequality in Australia and the ACOSS National Conference in November 2019 utilising poverty and inequality data to inform policy solutions.
- An event was held in Canberra featuring Abigail Scott Paul from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation providing partners and supporters with the opportunity to discuss the poverty narratives.

Poverty in Australian Reports

Overview was published on 21 February 2020. It includes the headline figures for poverty in Australia during the 2017-18 period, the latest for which data was available.

was published on 28 May 2020. This report took a deep dive into the demographic groups most affected by poverty in Australia, before the impacts of COVID-19, including a supplementary report on gendered poverty.

With cohealth, ACOSS published

, an infographic outlining the social determinants of health for the Partnership.

Media Impact

Key media coverage:

- 28 May 2020, Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 2, Who is affected? was covered by The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald, featuring on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald. The report was also covered by the ABC nationally, across TV, radio current affairs and online. An opinion piece by ACOSS Deputy CEO Jacqueline Philips ran in The Guardian.
- On February 21, Poverty in Australia Pt 1: Overview was covered by [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) ([link](#)).



ACOSS

Australian Community Sector Survey

The Australian Community Sector Survey was relaunched in October 2019 with the support of Bendigo Bank and the state and territory Councils of Social Service. The survey and reporting was undertaken by Dr Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland from the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW Sydney.

We had the highest number of responses ever to the survey questionnaire which was completed by 1,454 staff of community sector organisations, 406 in leadership positions. The questions covered demand for community services, funding issues, financial pressures, the sector workforce, and the impacts these have on the services provided.

ACOSS thanks all those who supported the survey: Bendigo Bank for financial and in-kind support; the Councils of Social Service for steering committee representation and for efforts to publicise the survey questionnaire; and those representatives of Australia's community sector who took part in the survey.

The survey results were published in three increments:

- The **Demand for Community Services Snapshot** in December 2019 to give a picture of the demand that community services faced in the lead up to the holiday period.

- in February 2020 to bring attention to the risks of ceasing Equal Remuneration supplementation for the community sector.

- in March 2020. This is the full report of the survey, including the findings on financial challenges, funding issues and the sector workforce. A COSS member-only webinar was run on 19 March 2020 to discuss the results of the survey in the lead up to the launch on 20 March.



Media Impact

Key media coverage:

- article in The Sydney Morning Herald by Carolyn Webb, 23 December 2019
- article in The Australian by Rachel Baxendale, 22 December 2019
- article in The Guardian by Josh Taylor, 23 December 2019

A Collaboration Hub for the Sector

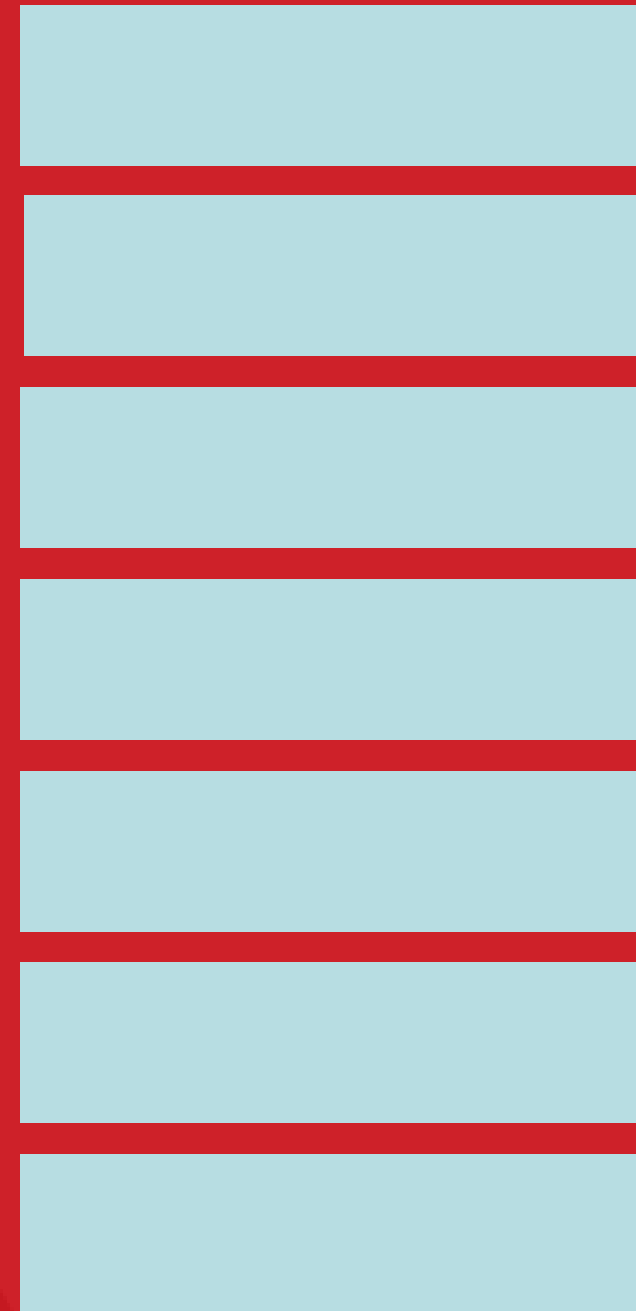
When the COVID-19 crisis hit in March 2020, ACOSS and its members were keenly aware of the need in the sector for coordination and sharing of news, developments and advocacy in a rapidly changing environment.

ACOSS received funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to enhance its role as a 'communications and information hub' for the sector during the pandemic.



Through the establishment of the Communications Hub we were able to grow our communications and engagement support to:

- Create a new sharing and showcasing the work of community sector organisations across the country.
- Increase our capacity to host regular National CEO Network meetings on a weekly and then fortnightly basis. These meetings provided an opportunity for sector CEOs to share real-time information about the impacts of the pandemic on organisations and vulnerable communities, and support advocacy and service delivery in response to the crisis.
- Develop policy responses and write briefing papers on the impact of the pandemic, and government policies on people and communities experiencing poverty and other forms of disadvantage.
- Develop a briefing paper series presenting the latest data and frontline feedback from ACOSS members about the economic, social, and environmental impacts of COVID-19 on people on lower incomes or facing higher risks.
- Advocate directly to Ministers, politicians, the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission, government and other key decision makers and influencers.
- Develop a COVID-19 response and recovery webinar series (launched in July 2020).
- Use social media to share sector services and advocacy campaigns.
- Create a on our website dedicated to provide information on services and advocacy for people at risk and the community sector, including:



Climate and Energy Work

This year, ACOSS worked with a number of partners to bring a customer centred, equitable and efficient focus to energy network access and pricing solutions, and to initiatives to better integrate distributed energy resources (DER) like solar. Our partners included the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the Australian Energy Market Commission, the Australian Energy Regulator, Energy Consumers Australia, Energy Networks Australia, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the Total Environment Centre. Following extensive consultations, including three workshops with more than 120 stakeholders, the partnership presented an recommending key changes and how to progress them. As a result, ACOSS and TEC submitted an to the AEMC that aims to support greater network investment

and better operation of DER, to deliver cleaner, more equitable and more efficient outcomes for all energy users.

ACOSS continued our collaborative work advocating for measures to enable people on low incomes to access energy efficiency and new technology like rooftop solar, to lower energy bills and improve health outcomes. Our advocacy with the Healthy and Affordable Homes Coalition resulted in COAG Energy Council agreeing to implement

. In response to the need to stimulate jobs and support recovery from COVID-19 economic impacts, ACOSS coordinated the development of the

, which calls on Governments to invest directly in energy retrofits for low-income homes while creating more than 40,000 jobs. The proposal attracted the support of 50+ organisations. ACOSS also partnered with the Energy Efficiency Council, Australian Industry Group and the Property Council to host a

attended by over 700 people.

In response to the catastrophic and unprecedented bushfires, which were made worse by climate change, ACOSS worked closely with the sector to advocate for Federal Government support to assist the sector to provide appropriate services and help for people and organisations affected. In response the Government provided greater flexibility in service contracts, increased disaster payment for children, temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements, and established a \$2 billion recovery fund. ACOSS also partnered with the Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, the Climate Council and VCOSS to host a community sector focused roundtable as part of the National Bushfire and Climate Summit. The launch of the resulting report

was attended by more than 2,500 people.

Employment Work

Australia just endured the deepest recession in over 80 years. The number of people on JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance has doubled to 1.6 million.

Our big concern now is that we will see over a million people unemployed long term next year. We have advocated for the Federal Government to take bolder action to generate jobs, and introduce a for people unemployed long term.

ACOSS participated in the government's

which acknowledged that the jobactive program was compliance-heavy yet inadequate in helping people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. The Panel's recommended shift to online services for people closer to employment is being implemented, but not the proposed investment in improved services for people unemployed long term. The welcome exceptions are the JobTrainer vocational training program and the new wage subsidies for young people. ACOSS continues to advocate for these to be available to people of all ages unemployed long term.

As **'mutual obligations' are progressively reintroduced**, we have advocated for the removal of their harshest elements,

including automated suspension of payment when people miss a provider appointment.

ACOSS also developed and advocated for **local employment and skills development partnerships**, promoting a shift from a top-down approach to employment programs towards local partnerships among employers, unions, employment services, TAFEs and community colleges, and local community agencies to prepare and connect people with employment. The government's announcement of the Local Jobs Program is a welcome step towards this.

This and much more will be needed to stem the tide of unemployment and lift up those left behind.

Media Impact

Key media coverage:

- article in Sydney Morning Health by Mate Wade, 3 April 2020



National Conference

In November 2019, over 300 representatives from civil society gathered in Canberra for the ACOSS National Conference. Through the conference theme, Harnessing Community for Effective Action, the event explored key questions proposed by the ACOSS membership at a Strategy Day held in July 2019 including:

- How can we harness the power of local community action to influence national policy debates?
- How do we bridge the divide between urban and rural/regional communities to deliver better policy outcomes for all?
- How do we talk about poverty to win hearts and minds and solve it?

The program featured a phenomenal line-up of speakers with diverse expertise and included keynote addresses from Abigail Scott Paul of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (UK); Phillip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (US); Guy Debelle, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia; Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Community Services; Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition; Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens; and Andrew Barr, ACT Chief Minister. Session facilitators included journalists Karla Grant, Gabrielle Chan, Patricia Karvelas, Royce Kurlmelovs and Mike Foley.

Attendees widely named the panel discussion 'Delivering on the promise of the Uluru Statement' as a program highlight. This session, facilitated by Karla Grant and featuring Karen Mundine, CEO Reconciliation Australia; Thomas Mayor, Uluru National Constitutional Convention; and Carla McGrath, Program Director for the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity, explored how civil society organisations can support the reform process to deliver on the Uluru Statement.

Through an expanded bursary and scholarship program supported by HESTA, Bendigo Bank, the Group of Eight Universities, Infoxchange and the Raise the Rate campaign supporters, 54 people living on low incomes were supported to attend and participate fully in the conference through the provision of travel, accommodation, meals and registration.

Media Impact

Key media coverage:

- The National Conference generated media coverage of speeches by the Opposition Leader and the Deputy Reserve Bank Governor about employment and income support.
- During the National Conference in Canberra, attendees on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance visited Parliament House to share their stories with politicians. To coincide with this, we released a survey on young people's experience of struggling to survive on Newstart and Youth Allowance. The survey was picked up by mainstream press, Channel 10 and WIN TV news, ABC and commercial radio news and online media, including through a press conference held at Parliament House.

Policy and Advocacy Work

In addition to our focus areas of raising the rate, climate change and energy, and employment, we continued to develop policy, advocate and conduct research on quality services, taxation and social security.

- We continued our campaign, in partnership with the COSS Network, for the continuation of funding for equal pay by the Federal Government.
- We influenced the political agenda on fundraising reform, through coordinated advocacy, in partnership with the #fixfundraising coalition.
- We campaigned, alongside a broad coalition of LGBTIQ people and organisations and others for a complete re-write of the Religious Freedom Bills.
- We influenced the shape of the Data Sharing and Release reforms being crafted by the National Data Commissioner, and informed the community sector about their impacts.
- 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.

- We continued to advocate against personal tax cuts, which will remove public revenue for years to come and creates a risk of future cuts to essential services and income supports; tax cuts disproportionately go to the highest 20% of taxpayers, who are more likely to save than spend.
- We advocated for new ways to finance a universal service guarantee for home and residential care using uniform taxing of superannuation fund earnings before and after retirement, and by broadening the Medicare Levy income definition to include tax sheltered income (e.g. negatively-geared property).

- Since its inception, we have advocated against Robodebt, the Federal Government's automated debt recovery program. This year we welcomed the Federal Court of Australia's finding that Robodebt was unlawful and the subsequent repayment by the Federal Government to almost 400,000 people who had alleged debts that were unlawfully calculated. We worked with several other organisations to stop legislation in the parliament that would further extend cashless debit, resulting in politicians sitting on the crossbench to undertake further community consultation.
- We also prepared an overview of evidence to date of the effectiveness or otherwise of cashless debit and income management to show that there continues to be a glaring lack of credible evidence that quarantining income helps the people subjected to it and their communities.



Media and Communications

We have worked with people with lived experience of unemployment across the country to share their story publicly, bringing in new practices to help ensure people can do so in a way they feel comfortable and respected. We have been able to work with people on income support who have shared their expertise in hundreds of media stories, including television interviews and front page newspaper stories. We have held multiple press conferences featuring people with first-hand insights, including two at Parliament House. We drew attention to the experience of people receiving Newstart, Youth Allowance and JobSeeker payments with the release of surveys in July and November 2019 and June 2020. Raise the Rate campaign supporters with lived experience of income support featured strongly in coverage of all three surveys, which were covered by The Sydney Morning Herald/Age, News Limited, the Guardian, ABC TV and radio, A Current Affair and more than 80 regional newspapers. This has strongly contributed to increased support among politicians, industry groups and the public for a permanent, adequate increase to income support payments. We have also been able to share people's stories by posting powerful quotes and videos on social media. These personal stories have become our most popular and frequent social media posts, inspiring others to also share their story to continue to change the narrative about what it means to be unemployed in Australia.

In addition, ACOSS has maintained a consistent high profile presence in news and current affairs media, with significant spikes in coverage. The biggest month

for media was February 2020 with over 1,800 mentions. Nearly a third of these – 500, were for coverage of the Poverty in Australia Overview report on 21 February.

Another spike of 570 mentions was driven by the release of the first section of the Community Sector Survey in December – many with the disturbing headline that 'Just 5% of community service staff able to meet demand for services'.

Other coverage spikes occurred in response to government action (or inaction):

- 9 September – Federal Government's plan to drug test Newstart recipients.
- 29 November – Senate Committee grills Social Services Minister Anne Ruston on threat to community sector pay (when the Equal Remuneration Order expires).
- 27 February – Parliamentary Budget Office found shifting single parents onto Newstart saved \$5 billion but increased poverty.
- 20 March – response to Federal Government announcement of JobKeeper and JobSeeker.
- 8 June – response to Senate hearing revelation that 2.3 million people will be receiving the Coronavirus Supplement by September
The high level reactive coverage is testament to the reputation of ACOSS and CEO Cassandra Goldie as a trusted and important voice in public policy discussion.



Raise the Rate supporters Shelley and Ellen from Lismore address media in a press conference at Parliament House with ACOSS spokespeople.

Website Data

Total Website Users

2018 - 2019: 181,799
2019 - 2020: 185,696
Increase of around 2%

Total Website Pageviews

2018 - 2019: 396,745
2019 - 2020: 469,935
Increase of around 16%



Facebook

Likes
2018 - 2019: 7783
2019 - 2020: 10,654
% Increase = 36.9%

Followers
2018 - 2019: 7962
2019 - 2020: 11,015
% Increase = 38.35%



Twitter

Engagement
Likes: 35,400
Retweets: 25,200
Mentions: 13.934

Followers
2018 - 2019: 24,500
2019 - 2020: 26,900
% Increase = 9.799%



Media

Mentions
2018 - 2019: 4,500
2019 - 2020: 8,500
% Increase = 47.6%

Who We Are

Staff

Kellie Caught – Senior Advisor (Climate and Energy)

Beverly Carter from Sept 2019 – Reception and Team Support Officer

Charmaine Crowe – Senior Advisor (Social Security)

Peter Davidson – Principal Advisor

Penelope Dorsch – Communications and Information (to August 2019); Project Manager and Researcher (from August 2019)

Pasquale Forgione – Campaign Coordinator (Raise the Rate)

Renata Franz – Operations Manager

Cassandra Goldie – Chief Executive Officer

Cameron Lum from Aug 2019 – Digital Communications Officer

Edwina MacDonald (from May 2020) – Director of Strategy (COVID-19)

William Martin – Marketing, Communication and Events Coordinator (to November 2019); Communications Officer (from December 2019)

John Mikelsons – Senior Advisor (Community Services and Health)

Chryl Perry – Executive Assistant to the CEO

Jacqueline Phillips – Deputy CEO and Director of Policy and Advocacy

Daniella Previtera – Marketing, Communications and Events Coordinator

Alyssa Shaw (From March 2020) – Raise the Rate Campaigner

Amy Simmons – Director of Operations and Stakeholder Engagement

Monique Vandeleur – Director of Media and Communications

Brendan Wylie – Membership Coordinator and Policy Support Officer

Casual Staff

Hawa Camara

Michelle Shackleton

Gerard Thomas

Board

Mr Tony Reidy – President (to June 2020)

Mr Peter McNamara – Treasurer

Ms Hang Vo – Deputy President (to November 2019)

Ms Connie Digolis – Deputy President (from December 2019)

Mr Matt Gardiner – Board Member

Ms Petra Hilton – Board Member

Mr David Panter – Board Member

Ms Violet Roumeliotis – Board Member (from November 2019)

Ms Mary Sayers – Board Member (from November 2019)

Ms Amanda Bresnan – Board Member (to November 2019)

Ms Vanessa Fanning – Board Member (to November 2019)

Mr Hayden Patterson – 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

Ninety-Two National
Organisation Members

Adult Learning Australia	Centre for Social Impact	Good Shepherd Microfinance	National Rural Health Alliance
AIDS Trust of Australia	CHOICE	Good Things Foundation Australia	National Shelter
Anglicare Australia	Christians Against Poverty	Goodstart Early Learning	Ostara Australia
Anti-Poverty Week	cohealth	Homelessness Australia	Playgroup Australia
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	Community Colleges Australia	Homes for Homes	Public Health Association of Australia
Australian Association of Social Workers	Community Housing Industry Association	HOST International	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Australian Baha’i Community	Community Legal Centres Australia	Human Rights Law Centre	Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council	Community Mental Health Australia	Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis & Support Agency	Reconciliation Australia
Australian Communications Consumer Action Network	Community Transport Organisation	Infoxchange	Relationships Australia
Australian Council of State School Organisations	Consumer Action Law Centre	Jobs Australia	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations	Consumers Health Forum of Australia	Justice Connect	Settlement Council of Australia
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	COTA Australia	Life Without Barriers	Settlement Services International
Australian Insulation Foundation	CRANaplus	MacKillop Family Services	Social Ventures Australia
Australian Men’s Health Forum	DCSS Australia	Mind Australia	Society of St Vincent de Paul National Council
Australian Neighbourhood Houses & Centres Association	Disability Advocacy Network Australia	Mission Australia	The Benevolent Society
Australian Pensioners & Superannuants Federation	Down Syndrome Australia	Multiple Sclerosis Australia	The Salvation Army Australia
Australian Red Cross	Early Childhood Australia	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service	The Smith Family
Australian Youth Affairs Coalition	Economic Justice Australia	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	UnitingCare Australia
Baptist Care Australia	Edmund Rice Centre	National Association of People With HIV Australia	Volunteering Australia
Better Renting	Family and Relationship Services Australia	National Association of Tenant Organisations	WESNET
Brotherhood of St Laurence	Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia	National Ethnic Disability Alliance	YMCA Australia
Carers Australia	Financial Counselling Australia	National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum	YWCA Australia
Catholic Social Services Australia	Foodbank Australia	National LGBTI Health Alliance	
	Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand		

Six National Constituency Organisation Members

- Anti-Poverty Network SA
- Australian Unemployed Workers’ Union
- National Council of Single Mothers and their Children
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia
- People with Disability Australia
- Women With Disabilities Australia

Sixty-Three Associate Members

- Accordwest
- ADRA Australia
- Anglicare Community Services
- Anglicare Victoria
- Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies
- Australian Education Union
- Australian Refugee and Migrant Care Services
- Australian Services Union
- AWARE Community
- Berry Street
- BeyondHousing
- Blue Sky Community Services
- Canberra Community Law
- Catholic Social Services Victoria
- CentaCare New England North West
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

- Centre for Women’s Economic Safety
- Churches Housing Incorporated
- Community Industry Group
- Community Information and Support Victoria
- Community Resources Limited
- CORE Community Services
- Cowra Information & Neighbourhood Centre
- Energetic Communities
- Fairpaye
- Family Support Newcastle
- Financial Counsellors’ Association of WA
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Focus Connect
- Homelessness NSW
- Illawarra Legal Centre
- Institute of Child Protection Studies
- Jannawi Family Centre
- Lifetime Renewable Energy
- Lutheran Community Care
- Melbourne’s Leading Nanny Agency
- Mountains Community Resource Network
- Nepean Community and Neighbourhood Services
- NSW Federation of Housing Associations
- One Future
- PeakCare Queensland
- Peninsula Community Legal Centre

- Penrith City Council
- Rainbow Families
- Samaritans Foundation
- Single Mothers Lobby Alliance
- 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
- Tender Plus Consulting
- Think+DO Tank Foundation
- United Voice
- Uniting Communities
- Uniting CountrySA
- Victorian Kids in Care Advocacy Service
- Welfare Rights Centre
- Westgate Community Initiatives Group
- WESTIR

Members

TOTAL NUMBER OF NATIONAL ORGANISATION MEMBERS
2018 - 2019 = 84

TOTAL NUMBER OF NATIONAL ORGANISATION MEMBERS
2019 - 2020 = 98

PERCENTAGE INCREASE
(2018/2019 TO 2019/2020) = 16%

TOTAL NUMBER OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
2018 - 2019 = 63

TOTAL NUMBER OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
2019 - 2020 = 63

PERCENTAGE INCREASE
(2018/2019 TO 2019/2020) = 0%

TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS
2018-19 = 1640

TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS
19-20 = 1977

PERCENTAGE INCREASE = 21%

Policy Advisors

Community Services

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

Partners

Australia Post

Bendigo Bank

HESTA

Infoxchange

Group of Eight

UTS Centre for Social Justice and
Inclusion

Event Sponsors

Australian Financial Complaints Authority

Pro Bono Australia

The Canberra Times

Australia Post

Pro Bono Supporters

Ashurst

Mckinsey & Co

Financial Supporters

Australian Government Department of
Social Services

Energy Consumers Australia

Paul Ramsay Foundation

Raise The Rate Supporters

The Australian Communities Foundation

Impact Fund

The Broadly Trust

The Fairness Fund

The Fay Fuller Foundation

The Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation

The Maple Brown Family Foundation

The Myer Foundation

The Reichstein Foundation

The Ross Trust

The Snow Foundation

The Wyatt Trust

The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

Poverty and Inequality
Project Partners

Anglicare Australia

Australian Red Cross

BB and A Miller Foundation

Brotherhood of St Laurence

cohealth

David Morawetz’ Social Justice Fund

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

Hart Line & Raettvisa, sub-funds of
Australian Communities Fund

Mission Australia

Society of St Vincent de Paul National
Council

Salvation Army Australia

The Smith Family

Poverty and Inequality
Steering Committee

Dr Cassandra Goldie, ACOSS

Jacqueline Phillips, ACOSS

Professor Carla Treloar, Social Policy
Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

Dr Bruce Bradbury, Social Policy Research
Centre, UNSW Sydney

Dr Yuvisthi Naidoo, Social Policy Research
Centre, UNSW Sydney

Professor Evelyne de Leeuw, Centre for
Primary Health Care and Equity, UNSW
Sydney

Professor Mark Harris, Centre for Primary
Health Care and Equity, UNSW Sydney

Professor Brendan Edgeworth, Faculty of
Law, UNSW Sydney

Professor Bill Randolph, City Futures
Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

Professor Hal Pawson, City Futures
Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

Professor Shelley Mallett, Brotherhood of

St Laurence

Julie Connolly, Brotherhood of St
Laurence

Jacquelin Plummer, Mission Australia

Jo Fildes, Mission Australia
Dini Liyanarachchi, Mission Australia

Elli McGavin, The Salvation Army
Australia

Emma Scott, The Salvation Army
Australia

Rob Sturrock, The Smith Family
Sarah Squire, Good Shepherd Australia
New Zealand

Laura Vidal, Good Shepherd Australia
New Zealand

Rose Beynon, Society of St Vincent de
Paul National Council

Dr Jennie Gray, WACOSS

Brooke McKail, VCOSS

Poverty and Inequality
Advisory Panel

Terese Edwards, National Council of
Single Mothers and Their Children

John Hewson, Tax and Transfer Policy
Institute, ANU

Roger Wilkins, University of Melbourne

Owen Bennet, Australian Unemployed
Workers’ Union

Fran Baum, Southgate Institute for
Health, Society and Equity

Jarrold Ball, Committee for Economic
Development of Australia (CEDA)

Mary Patetson, Federation of Ethnic
Communities’ Councils of Australia
(FECCA)

Publications

Submissions

22 June 2020	3rd October 2019
26 May 2020	3rd October 2019
ACOSS Submission to Senate Inquiry: Lessons Learned in Relation to the Australian Bushfire Season 2019-2020 11 June 2020	19th September 2019
5th May 2020	16th September 2019
5th May 2020	28th August 2019
10th February 2020	15th August 2019
4th February 2020	
31st January 2020	
7th November 2019	
22nd October 2019	

Key Reports and Publications

Access Pricing Reform Package – Outcomes Report (June 2020)
More Sun for Everyone Rule Change 7 July 2020
COVID 19 Housing and Homelessness Briefing 6 June 2020
Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 2, Who Is Affected? 28 May 2020
Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 2, Who is affected? Factsheet 28 May 2020
Faces of Unemployment 2020 Accessible Version Here 1st April 2020
The Profile and Pulse of the Sector: Findings from the 2019 Australian Community Sector Survey Accessible Version Here 20th March 2020
Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 1, Overview 28th February 2020
Challenges for Australia’s Community Sector: ERO Supplementation 27th February 2020
ACOSS Budget Priority Statement 2020-2021 30th January 2020

Briefing Notes and Position Statements

ACOSS Briefing Note, June 2020:
Super Payment Transitions

Review on raising the age of criminal responsibility
3rd March 2020

ACOSS Briefing Note, June 2020:

- The Temperature:
Update from ACOSS and
– Part 1
View Here
- The Temperature:
Update from ACOSS and
– Part 2
View Here
- The Temperature:
Update from ACOSS and
– Part 3
View Here

ACOSS Brief: Health of the NEM
– Current and emerging energy
affordability issues for people on low
incomes.
24th February 2020

ACOSS Brief, February 2020:
Member brief on ACOSS policies for
the retirement incomes review

Newstart Increase Briefing Note
30th January 2020

Accessible ACOSS Budget Priority
Statement 2020-2021
30th January 2020

ACOSS Action Plan, January 2020:
Responding to the National Bushfire
Crisis

Demand for Community Services
Snapshot, December 2019
23rd December 2019

ACOSS Briefing Note, December 2019:
ACOSS Retirement Review brief for
Members

ACOSS Briefing Note, December 2019:
Demand for Community Services

ACOSS Action Plan, March 2020:

22nd November 2019

ACOSS Briefing Note, November 2019:
Payment Integrity Bill

5th August 2019

Response to Trajectory for
Energy Existing Homes Survey
2019 Draft Report
1st November 2019

ACOSS Briefing Note, August 2019:

Joint ACOSS/Cohealth
Health Inequality in
18th October 2019

ACOSS Briefing Note, July 2019:

Review of the U.S.
National Partnership
8th October 2019

6th July 2019

ACOSS Briefing Note, October 2019:
Raise the
stats for

Briefing
Investment
29th August 2019



Treasurer's Message

This is my first report as ACOSS Treasurer, having stepped into the role in July 2020. I would like to thank Peter McNamara for his leadership and oversight as ACOSS Treasurer from November 2018 – June 2020.

Peter and Cassandra have led the implementation of a Board endorsed strategy to diversify ACOSS income streams that saw year on year income growth of 20% in FY18 and FY19 and 11% in FY20. This is a huge achievement and a credit to Peter, Cassandra and the ACOSS team.

I am pleased to report ACOSS operated sustainably over the 2019-20 year, recording a surplus of \$25,437.

As was the experience for many organisations across our sector and the economy more broadly, the COVID-19 pandemic created a range of challenges in the latter part of the financial year. Operational and project activity underwent significant change to see that the work of ACOSS continued, and face to face events were postponed or cancelled. As a result, some ACOSS income sources were impacted. However, with thanks to the Federal Government, what was lost was largely made

up in stimulus, including the universally available business cash flow support as well as JobKeeper 1.0 for a limited number of staff positions.

Total income for the year was \$3,249,415 and total expenditure was \$3,223,978.

Our expenditure profile was relatively consistent with previous years. Wages remains the biggest cost area, at 63% of total costs. There was a modest investment made in the website (within administration) for our Poverty and Inequality project, and an increase to contractor (within activity) costs for an external secondment to our COVID-19 project.

Looking at our balance sheet, reserves at 30 June 2020 are \$613,261, which are just above the benchmark set by the Board, and provide some buffer to unforeseen future risks.

The 2020 financial statements have been audited by Stewart Brown and an unqualified audit opinion was issued. Copies of our audited statements can be downloaded from the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission website.



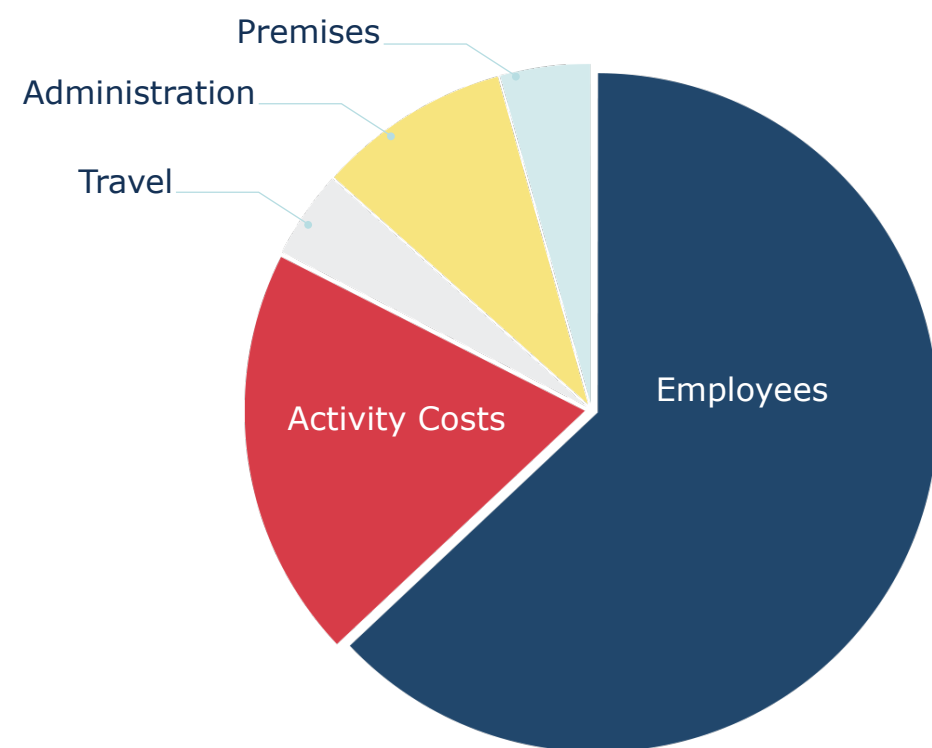
Matt Gardiner
Treasurer, ACOSS

Financial Report 2019 - 2020

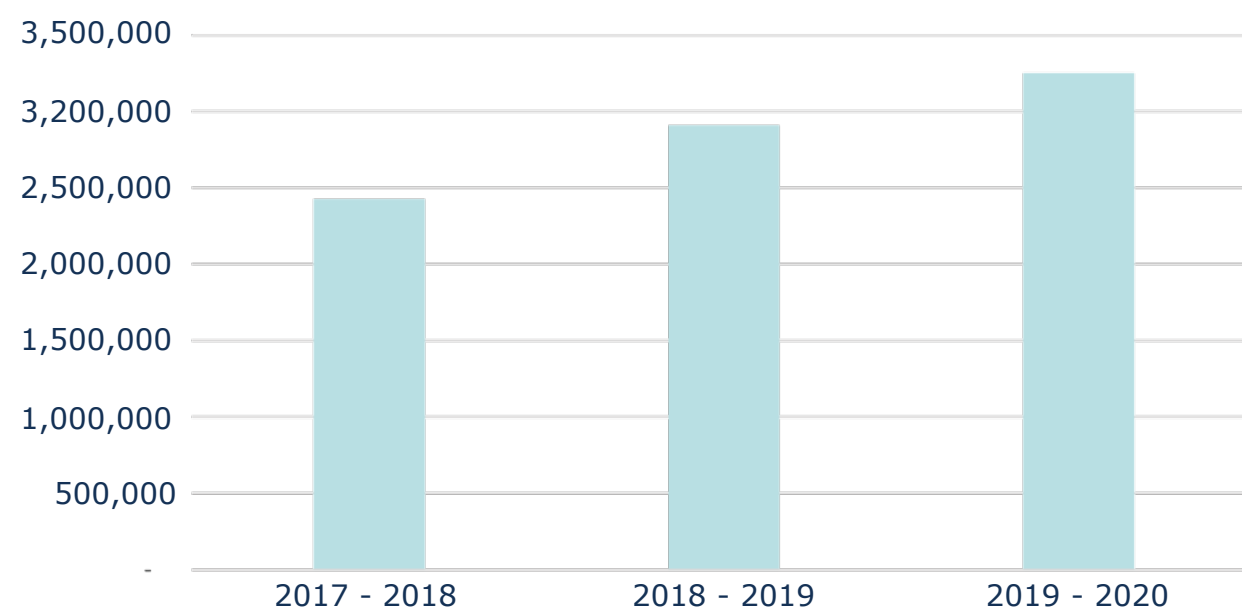
Financial Performance	FY 18/19	FY 19/20
Income		
Australian Government Grant	\$919,691	\$927,875
Project Funding	\$842,951	\$1,030,317
Membership Fees	\$411,913	\$447,430
Sponsorship	\$435,300	\$440,000
Donations	\$34,444	\$13,929
Other	\$264,623	\$389,864
Total	\$2,908,921	\$3,249,415
Assets		
Cash & Equivalent	\$1,599,660	\$1,485,080
Trade & Other Receivables	\$351,711	\$761,118
Non-Current Assets	\$81,406	\$48,510
Total	\$2,032,777	\$2,294,708

Financial Position	FY 18/19	FY 19/20
Expense		
Salaries & On-costs	\$1,786,154	\$2,029,876
Activity Costs	\$628,728	\$629,517
Travel	\$109,757	\$133,263
Administration	\$239,670	\$293,535
Premises	\$142,310	\$137,787
Total	\$2,906,619	\$3,223,978
Surplus (Deficit)	2,302	25,437
Liabilities		
Trade & Other Payables	\$1,154,749	\$1,311,102
Employee Benefits	\$273,802	\$340,158
Non-Current Liabilities	\$16,402	\$30,187
Total	\$1,444,953	\$1,681,447
Equity	\$587,824	\$613,261

Our Spending 2019 - 2020



Income





Australian Council of Social Service

www.acoss.org.au

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

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